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The clans are of basic importance. They are the largest units of solidarity, and open conflict never occurs within them, as it would not between a man's clan and his wife's and mother's clan. It is through his clan that a man establishes his totemic relations and identifies himself with the sacred world by virtue of a mystical experience of his father. The mother is supposed to be spiritually fertilized by the entrance into her uterus of the infant's soul when it has come from the child's father's totemic well. Many ethnologists have insisted that the Australian aborigines have no knowledge of physiological conception. Although I held this opinion during the first part of my field work, I later came to the conclusion that knowledge of procreation is general to the Murngin but is considered of little importance.[4]

The blood feud is forever present and tends to kill a sufficient number of young men to allow the system of polygyny[5] to function. The Murngin have developed a number of well-constructed types of warfare which form dramatic episodes in the several chains of feuds linking the dead generations of the past to those of the living.

The moiety[6] is a still larger unit than the clan, dividing the sixty-odd clans into two groups which intermarry. By the device of the moiety, the whole of the life of the Murngin, as well as nature, is placed in two opposing groups called Yiritja and Dua.

A final important structure in Murngin society is the age-grading[5] institution. It divides, first, the men from the women (see page 131, Age Grading) on the basis of those who are initiated into the mysteries and those who are not, and then redivides the men on an age-graded scale based primarily on the place a man achieves within the rest of his social organization through *rites de passage*.

Within this social configuration the life of each Murngin male goes through an exact cycle. The first life crisis occurs when the Murngin soul, through the father's mystic experience, leaves the totemic well and enters the womb of the mother. By circumcision around the age of six to eight years the individual passes from the social status of a woman to that of a man. When at about the age of eighteen he achieves parenthood and is shown his totems for the first time, he goes to another, higher status; and to a still higher when, at about thirty-five, he sees the high totems. At death he passes through a very elaborate mortuary rite, returns to his totemic well, and the circle is complete. The personality before birth is purely spiritual; it becomes almost completely profane or unspiritual in the earlier period of its

[4] See pages 23-25.
[5] See Glossary of Technical Terms.

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keeps the kinship position of offspring of such a marriage adjusted to the organization of his group. The son of a woman and man who have married wrong and who are not dué (father's sister's son) and galle (mother's brother's daughter) to each other is called gatu by the man and waku by the woman, just as is a son by correct marriage. The sons by another wife of the man would call this child of an improper marriage brother, and the other members of the patrilineal line of the clan would call him by the kinship term they would use if he were the offspring of a proper marriage.[18]

The practice of tracing the descent of relatives within the clan through the father, and outside through the mother, although largely designed to strengthen the clan solidarity and create a sharp line of demarcation between it and other such groups, at times has had the opposite effect.

The Warumeri and Wangurri clans have until recently been bitter rivals for the possession of women of clans in the other moiety. Certain members of the Warumeri clan in the last generation married women who should have become the wives of Wangurri clansmen, since their fathers stood in the relationship of mother's brother to ego.

[18] The relatives from other clans would ignore the relationship of the son to the father in the case of a wrong marriage and call the child the proper term applied to him when tracing his place in the kinship system through the mother. Thus if ego's father married a woman ego called momo (father's mother), ego would call their child brother, for he would trace the relationship through his father, because of the influence of the clan and family; but ego's nati (mother's father), for example, would call the child waku (sister's son), instead of kaminyer (daughter's son, daughter's daughter) as he calls ego.

Nati, being outside the clan, would trace his relationship to the child of the wrong marriage through the mother. The mother in the above example would be nati's sister, so that the child would be sister's son to him. Ego's gawel (mother's brother) would call this child of ego's father by a wrong marriage to ego's momo, dué, instead of the usual waku, since he is father's sister's son if the relationship is traced through the mother.

It can be seen that this process of reckoning relationship through the mother by all outside clans is continually changing the kinship composition of the various clans. New lines of descent are constantly springing out of different clans for those of the kin who are outside its limits. A clan that would for a period have only a mari and marelker and a mari and mokul for the male and female relatives in one's clan other than one's own patrilineal line, could, by a wrong marriage of the male mari—let us say, to a waku—create a gurrong-kutara line of descent for ego on the old mari-marelker clan.

When a clan develops a subclan within it, and this smaller unit is rather strongly organized, there is a possibility of the same process being applied within the clan that ordinarily takes place outside it. When this happens the mari-marelker and gurrong-kutara lines may be found within the clan. This occurs very rarely because these subgroups are unusual within the clan.

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614 The Wangurri organized a raid, killed many of the Warumeri men
628 and took the women for themselves. The children who were born
583 from the Warumeri fathers before the capture of their mothers by the
601 other clan were called gatu by the men who had captured their mothers, and wawa or yukiyuko by these men's sons, who were their progeny through proper marriage. The sons of these women by Wangurri fathers were also called wawa or yukiyuko by the Wangurri sons, not only because the fathers reckoned their relationship through the clan but because the mother too was in the right relationship.

In addition to reckoning kin as above, the Wangurri sons, by tracing the relationship of the Warumeri sons of these women through the mother, would call them brothers, just as the new husbands of these women would apply the term gatu to these children. The same procedure would be true of the Warumeri for the Wangurri offspring. Thus, instead of strengthening the differences between two clans, the tracing of descent through the mother for outside clans has broken down the ordinary clan walls and has done much to hasten the process of consolidation that can be seen taking place at the present time between two clans which possess contiguous territories and hold most of their totems in common. A Wangurri man is now head of both clans.

614 Below are listed the clans which usually intermarry. This does not
582 mean that these clans do not also marry into other groups. It is felt, however, according to my informants, that the clans listed in the right-hand column are the ones into which those listed in the left-hand column prefer to marry.

Barlmawi	⟷	Liaalaomir
Birkili	⟷	Perango, Djirin, Gwiyula
Bringel	⟷	Mandelpui, Liaalaomir, Wawilak
Daiuror	⟷	Liagaomir, Naladaer, Djirin, Liaalaomir
Djawark	⟷	Darlwongo
Djirin	⟷	Warumeri, Birkili, Daiuror, Wangurri
Gunalbingu	⟷	Kurkamarnapia
Gwiyamil	⟷	Liagaomir, Liaalaomir
Gwiyula	⟷	Birkili
Karmalanga	⟷	Burera (tribe), Wulkara
Kiki	⟷	Maradunggimi
Kolpa	⟷	Perango, Murru
Komaits	⟷	Riraidjingo
Liagaomir	⟷	Wulkara, Gwiyamil, Daiuror
Lummaini	⟷	Riraidjingo

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593 835 copulating with their wives, thereby forcing the wawa to defend his brother from their vengeance.

607 Because all of the members of a group of brothers are all dué to the same galle and the women thereby are the potential wives of all yukiyukos of this group, there is a strong tribal rule that no yukiyuko can talk to or be near wawa's wives, but wawa can talk to and be near yukiyuko's. (This would not be true of a woman beyond the age when she would be sexually interested in yukiyuko, nor of boys below the age of puberty.) The rule holds against all yukiyukos, near or distant, except where blood brothers are involved who have a tremendous love and trust in each other. Breaking of the rule by blood brothers was observed, but not by tribal brothers.

593 583 587 There is still another method by which the junior levirate operates. A wawa often gives one or two of his younger wives to yukiyuko. These wives may merely be those promised by a gawel and for whom wawa has made presents (wawa would be forced to obtain permission from gawel in this case); or wawa may give yukiyuko wives he has already lived with, in which circumstances permission need not be asked.

If wawa has four or five wives, he may say to a single yukiyuko, "You see that one—you take her and feed her." Yukiyuko usually says, if wawa is an old man, "No, you are an old man. I'll wait until you die, then I'll have them all." Wawa replies, "No, you take her now, yukiyuko. I have many wives and you have none." Yukiyuko then takes her, and she belongs to him permanently. Wawa loses all right to her sexually and economically, and she cannot be returned to him. If yukiyuko died, his new wife would go to his younger brother, even though he were not consanguine but only tribal.

Ordinarily a man would present his younger brother with a wife if particularly pleased with some exploit of yukiyuko's, such as the successful termination of a punitive expedition against common enemies.

593 583 628 587 One of Warlumbopo's older brothers (actual) had been ambushed and mortally wounded by a tribal yukiyuko.

Shortly after this Warlumbopo walked into the camp of the dying man. Warlumbopo wailed for his dead brother. He refused to allow the wives of the dead man to bury him until he had killed the slayer of his wawa, when he returned to his dead brother and buried him.

When Daurlung, an older brother to Warlumbopo and younger to the dead man, heard the news he said, "We'll get all our Ritarngo people

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and go fight them." "No," said Warlumbopo. He had not told Daurlung of his killing their brother's slayer since the latter had been a good friend of Daurlung's. Daurlung said, "Yes, we must go kill our brother's slayer." "You can't kill him now." "Why?" "He's dead." "Who killed him?" "I did." "My own brother! Good! I'll give you two of my wives."[8]

This episode not only illustrates the operation of the junior levirate during the life of an older brother, but shows clearly the solidarity among a group of consanguine brothers and its lack between "far-off" brothers.

Wawa always is at the head of a family of brothers and has the strongest voice in their affairs if the father is very old or dead. However, if wawa is not of an assertive type, whereas one of the younger brothers is, the latter could hold equal authority with him and frequently would have the final decision on any problem that confronted them.

The oldest brother, who has the rights of ceremonial leadership for certain of the clan and moiety ceremonies, usually has the next oldest help him, and they confer over ceremonial matters on an almost equal basis; but, given two personalities of equal strength, the older would be by virtue of his age the more powerful in family affairs.

Usually two brothers cooperate in making a canoe, since of all economic labors this is the most difficult and extends over the greatest period of time. A canoe, too, has the highest economic value of all the Murngin's technological articles. Wawa has the most control over the canoe, although yukiyuko, if a man of will, may have an equal say in its management. If it were traded to another group, all the brothers would feel they had an ownership in it, even if they had not helped make it.

The brothers usually have an equal right to the property of each, although it is definitely known that a spear, a club, a basket, or any other such article belongs to one man and not to the group. A dog is known to belong to one man; yet the other brothers have a feeling of secondary ownership, and the dog recognizes them as secondary masters, much as with us a boy may own a dog and receive primary obedience and loyalty from his pet, while his brothers are secondary masters. These latter would look upon the dog as their brother's, but as "ours" in relation to outsiders.

If a son of one brother dies, the others always join in the ceremonial

[8] There is a full account of this incident in Warlumbopo's life as a warrior in the chapter on warfare, pages 177-190.

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578 837 "Let us go back and fight him," he said. The two took their spears and went. "Why do you keep on saying I try to lie with your wife? I didn't." Narnarngo called Bengaliwe "deindumeiu" (big testicles). Bengaliwe replied by calling Narnarngo "golitchirtommeru" (big kidneyed). Both terms designate a man who would break all laws of sexual behavior.

When Benaitjimaloi heard the quarrel he came over with his four brothers and stood back of Narnarngo to help him. He is true galle to Narnarngo. Other near male relatives joined each side and a new camp brawl was in progress. No one was killed or very much hurt in the fight that followed. It was later ascertained that a small boy, unaware of the string's significance, had taken it out of Bengaliwe's and placed it in Djowa's wife's basket.

837 43 Sometimes a woman attempts to seduce a young man into joining her for a lovers' assignation. She usually starts by sending him food. After these presents have been given for a while and he is sure of their meaning, he usually tells the woman who brings them for her friend to tell the other woman where he will meet her. If they have an assignation, he usually makes presents to her. Sometimes young men are so bashful that it takes much persuasion to force them into such a union.

583 837 626 628 A runaway marriage differs from a union caused by a man's stealing a woman in that the woman gives her consent; such an arrangement has the consent of neither her people nor his; whereas in the case of theft, a man's own people frequently support him, particularly if there has been hard feeling between the two clans and a conscious rivalry for the women of certain groups. The runaway union usually ends in his and her people attempting to send her back to her true dué, because it would lead to armed trouble between the man's people and the members of the right dué's clan, and also for the woman's people if they did not condemn the act by helping the true dué regain his wife. However, no man's clan would desert him in such a situation to the point of allowing him to be killed or attacked by the injured man's group. Ordinarily, such a situation ends in a "growling" match, in which the two sides stand armed behind the two opponents, the lover allowing the injured husband to have the better of the cursing. Sometimes such a runaway marriage leads to permanent union.

583 837 After a couple have been lovers for some time they may be so fond of each other as to risk everything and leave their own kin and go to a distant clan. Her people, the husband's gawel and galle, immediately help the injured spouse to regain his wife. The people of their groups

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604 855 When a mother goes away with the father for a trip to distant kinspeople, the older children are left with the mother's sisters, the mother's mother, or the mother's brother. The children turn to the near mothers for food and care with the same feeling as to their own mother.

593 628 A mother is deeply fond of her children. Maritcha saved the life of a young man about fifteen years old when some of the former's clansmen plotted the boy's death. The mother heard of this. Maritcha's clan and her own had had a feud for many years, yet from gratitude she attempted to help Maritcha and stop her own people from fighting him at a later time.

841 When a girl has her first menses the mother helps paint her and take care of her.

861 626 593 There is constant tribal pressure on a mother to be good to her children. No Murngin mother would dare correct her children in the manner of a European woman, for she would be considered cruel and inhuman. Camp gossip and opinion would uniformly condemn her and liken her to an animal. On the other hand, there is less restraint on a son and daughter concerning their mother than in our own society. They frequently curse her, and there is no taboo on the conversation used before her.

604 606 Little arndi (son's wife) occupies a different place in the kinship system, although the general behavior toward her would be the same as toward the true mother (see page 72). Waku in this case would also be a different person. He would be father's sister's husband or husband's father to small arndi.

If a small arndi's husband runs away she goes back to her mokul bapa (husband's mother) until he returns or until she has been given to a younger brother of the husband.

603 *Nati* ⟷ *Kaminyer* (diramo and mielk) (mother's father ⟷ daughter's child)

There are two types of this relationship since there are a female and a male kaminyer and only a male nati. There are five varieties of nati: (1) gawel's and arndi's true father; (2) brothers of this nati; (3) brothers of momo married to marikmo; (4) near nati; and (5) distant nati.

603 835 Nati always feeds his male kaminyer, but not the female because he and she would be afraid people might think he was trying to seduce her. He would also be afraid that she might think so herself. The

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examine the Murngin kinship behavior centered around sisters and daughters.

Fathers and brothers treat a daughter and sister alike in that (1) they decide to which of her dués she will belong; (2) they stand responsible for her loss by runaway marriage, et cetera; (3) they beat her for misconduct; (4) they supply another daughter and sister to her dué if she dies or is sterile; and (5) they come to her assistance if she is excessively mistreated by dué.

The above largely summarizes a father's behavior toward a daughter, but gives only a part of a brother's relationship with his sister. Except for the fifth case, the father and brother, so far as they obey tribal law, do all they can to force the daughter and sister into a permanent marriage and to censor the dué-galle relationship. The necessity of keeping a woman with her husband to protect the kinship structure of Murngin society is thus clearly felt by all people, including the members of her own family and clan, whose structures have been damaged by her going to a new family and clan.

The fifth element of behavior indicates a possibility of strife. No brother or father would interfere with a husband chastising his wife; indeed, they would help him. But if the wife were being brutally treated, or were killed for no just cause, they would interfere, which would usually mean a fight. Such an assumption of responsibility for the sister's and daughter's rights shows that she is still considered a part of her kinsmen's clan and family. It is only under the most extreme provocation that members of a woman's clan would act; no instance was recorded by the author. In case of a husband's brutality, his own clansmen apply pressure to prevent trouble with her clan, and also because of a feeling that such conduct is wrong.

If a brother killed his sister, no direct action would be taken by the clan, clan solidarity preventing it. This contrasts with the feeling of her own clan if her husband should kill her. It demonstrates that fundamentally she is considered as belonging to her own group, not to her husband's, even after she has been taken by the latter's clan.

Yet a brother calls his sister "wakinu," i.e., without relatives; and if her husband or anyone else swears at her in her brother's presence the latter throws spears at her and at all his other sisters, even though they are not involved in the quarrel. This behavior seemingly contradicts the above statement. There are several possible explanations. It might be said that he throws spears at her because he believes the swearing to be due to some fault of hers. A brief investigation proves

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For the purposes of the blood feud all children, including boys until the time they have a beard, are classed as women; it is felt wrong to kill very young men, who are usually not allowed to accompany the older men on fighting expeditions.

When a man sees the python totem for the first time he must have a moustache and beard. The young men who have not been initiated into the Djungguan by seeing the python totemic emblem are allowed to sit back of the brush hut where the totem is kept. If they are able to look through the wall, they must keep their heads down so that they cannot see what is inside. They are allowed to call out at the end of each song in the chorus with the older men.

When the time comes for them to paint for the last Djungguan ceremony, these young men who have not seen the totem go off to a little depression in the ground or behind some bushes some distance from the old men's camp and put their decorations on by themselves.

Men obtain their wives at almost any age after they have reached maturity, the first usually when the beard begins, and the others at any time after that through the operation of the levirate or because promised by their mother's brothers. For example, several old men over sixty had several female children promised them as wives. The best time for a boy to marry is when his moustache appears, when he "looks like a proper man," and not until then. His father and mother, as well as father-in-law, exert pressure on him to see that he remains single, and they also observe his behavior to make sure that he does not have contact with a girl before that, although usually their efforts are unsuccessful. "Gawel is on the lookout and no business happens with that girl. He says to the father and mother, 'I'll listen for you people too.'" A young man said to me, "We do not sleep with girls before we are married because we are afraid of the old people. Sometimes a girl who belongs to another man says yes and we do. If it is found out the proper husband raises a row, and maybe her father. Sometimes a boy gets killed this way and sometimes they only cut him until the blood comes" (in a makarata).

The proper time for a girl to marry is when her breasts first start developing.

In the married people's camp the husband and wife "own" the hut because they both participate in the making of it and both live in it. The woman ordinarily keeps it clean and throws away the garbage which collects about the floor. Usually she makes the fire and it is her duty to bring in the wood. It is also her duty to cook the shell

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CHAPTER VI

WARFARE

WARFARE is one of the most important social activities of the Murngin and surrounding tribes. Without it, Murngin society as it is now constituted could not exist. Any social change consequent upon the loss of the trait would demand a decided alteration in the fundamental structures of the civilization. Warfare prevents modifications in the society that would possibly destroy it.

The tribe is not the war-making group in this society, nor is the moiety. Warfare is as likely to occur within these groups as outside them. The clan, the largest social unit without internal armed conflict, is usually the war-making group. The causes leading to warfare are the killing of a clansman by a member of another clan, and interclan rivalry for women. The latter is the usual cause of a killing. Blood vengeance forces further killings. Clans within a moiety are more likely to be fighting, since clans of the opposite exogamic moieties are not in competition for women. An analysis of battles and killings shows this to be true in most cases, but there are a number of instances in which groups belonging to opposite moieties have been in conflict.

Feuds between clans of opposite moieties are more likely to die out for lack of the stimulus provided by competition for women. Such clans are likely to allow a makarata to be held, where blood is ceremonially shed as repayment for the death of a clansman, in order that the feud may be definitely ended.

It seems a probable hypothesis that one of the fundamental reasons for the creation of a phratry is a drive within the civilization to create social structures intermediate in size between moiety and clan, where open conflict would be taboo, as it is now within clan limits. This feeling is not strong enough to counterbalance the open antagonisms resulting from the struggle for women. The clan structure is too solid and too powerful to yield any of its influence to a larger social institution.

As will be seen later, polygyny is possible under present conditions

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628 only because of warfare, and, conversely, is a decided factor in stimulating open conflict because of the resultant scarcity of women.

628 602 182 The kinship system of the Murngin, with its attendant set of obligations, duties, rights and privileges stated sufficiently often before, tends to enlarge the scope of a two-clan feud to four or possibly all of the clans of the several tribes. The waku-gawel relationship, and also the duć-galle, mari-kutara, and marelker-gurrong relationships express a very strong solidarity; and a man can depend upon any one of these relatives, distributed in eight or more clans besides his own, to come to his assistance. An isolated killing, owing to the strength of the kinship structure, usually results in the whole of northeastern Arnhem Land becoming a battle ground at fairly frequent intervals.

Kinship solidarity extends warfare but also has the opposite tendency: that of limiting its scope when it has reached very large proportions. All the clans are interrelated, and generally many will find their loyalties divided, for the kinship through marriage of certain members of a clan will dictate their helping one faction, while other members will be compelled by the laws of kinship to aid the other side. Since the solidarity of the clan prevents members fighting among themselves, those clans whose loyalties are divided usually try to pacify the warring ones. In a makarata, frequently arranged by them, they will usually be found doing all they can to have this peace-making ceremony end successfully.

Ceremony, Myth, and Warfare

796 484 People who gather to celebrate the great totemic ceremonies, such as the Gunabibi, Djungguan, or Narra rites, come from clan territories sometimes hundreds of miles apart. The leaders for the Gunabibi ceremony, for instance, frequently come up through the interior from the headwaters of the Roper River in the south to the mouth of the Goyder. Members from all the tribes in the northern Arnhem Land district attend yearly. A ceremony assumes greater importance the larger the number of people present and the greater the distance they have come. A man always brags about how far he traveled, how many clans he visited on his pilgrimage to invite the various peoples to his circumcision, and how many people attended.

628 Warfare is in direct opposition to ceremony. It tends to destroy the larger group solidarity and ultimately to reduce the people who are at peace with each other to the clan unit, since only here is there absolute assurance that fighting cannot take place.

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If armed conflict breaks out in a camp where a ceremony is being celebrated, the ritual is usually stopped, either because the participants are afraid to stay, for they may be killed in their sleep, or because the leaders of the ceremony become angry at what they consider an insult to their totems.

It is believed that while a totemic emblem is in camp all fighting should cease, and any infraction of the tribal law is considered a direct insult to the totemic emblem and therefore to the clan. The leader of a Narra ceremony, at which the totemic emblems are used, almost always stops the ritual if there has been any serious infraction of tribal law, because he does not want to accept the consequences of an affront to his totem. It is believed that the totem itself would seek vengeance upon any leader who did not protect its interests at such a time. The writer saw two Narra, a Djungguan, and two Gunabibi ceremonies terminated because of the outbreak of fighting. The two Narra were stopped by the leaders because they said their totems were insulted, the Djungguan and Gunabibi because of the fighters' fear of death and also because of the anger of the leader of the ceremony. Another Narra ceremony was not stopped when a fight followed the catching of two women in adultery by their husbands. The women were thoroughly beaten—less because of the offense itself than because it took place while a great ceremony was being held—and might have been killed but for their escape in the black of night by swimming to a nearby island.

The deliberate stopping of a ceremony demonstrates that warfare and ceremony have clearly antithetical traits. The great ceremonies tend to enlarge the group solidarity both in numbers and in extent of territory and to create a smoothly functioning unit out of a large number of clans, but warfare destroys this unity and reduces the limits of solidarity to the clan.

Since both traits are necessary to the tribe's social organization, a nice periodical balance has been struck; at one period ceremonialism controls the people's activities, and later war is uppermost in the relations of the local groups.

Effects of Warfare on Population

A fairly accurate estimate places the population of this area around three thousand. The genealogical material gathered by the writer shows about an equal number of women and men, with possibly slightly more men than women. This means that there are about fifteen hun-

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dred men, more than half of whom have not reached the age of sixteen. This leaves approximately seven hundred men who are looking for mates among the same number of women. The statistical average of wives to one middle-aged man is three and one-half. Part of the discrepancy between the total numbers of married women and men is accounted for by the fact that women are taken in marriage just before they reach the age of puberty; although sexual intercourse is not indulged in until after puberty, the women otherwise are treated as wives. A second factor in establishing the unequal ratio is that men up to the age of twenty, and frequently to twenty-five, are without wives or have only one wife; they must wait either for the action of the levirate or for some of the younger females to mature. The two factors just named as expressions of the disproportionate sexual ratio in marriage do not account, however, for a sufficient number of women to make up the difference. The killing of young men below the age of twenty-five, because of the ever-present blood feuds, makes up the balance.

The one important effect of warfare on Murngin society is the seasonal slaying of a small proportion of young men who have passed adolescence and are potential or eligible mates.

In the summary of men killed in battle the writer recorded about one hundred deaths in the last twenty years caused by war. These figures obviously do not include all of the deaths from this cause. There are none recorded for the people south of Caledon Bay and only a few for those around Wessel Island and the English Company Islands, where heavy fighting has always taken place. It would be safe, on the basis of population, to add another hundred deaths to the figure above, making a total of two hundred men killed. Since each man averages three and one-half women, these men would have appropriated seven hundred women of the available supply, or, in terms of the present situation, the tribes needed seven hundred women less than they would have, had the men lived.

Warfare, then, is one of the mechanisms on which polygyny is based. If war were abolished, the percentage of men would increase, and the pressure on the social structure created by seeking mates would probably be too strong for the present form of polygyny, with its attendant mechanisms, the levirate and sororate, to survive. Since these latter mechanisms do much toward strengthening the society and preventing chaos attendant on the transfer of a woman from one clan to another, it will be seen that warfare, while destroying one type of

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solidarity (ceremonial), is partly responsible for the solid foundation of the kinship structure in Murngin society. Warfare also helps to prevent the breaking of tribal laws by the threat of retaliation from other social groups. Finally, it acts as the ultimate police power in the functioning of Murngin society. It is the threat of its force which ultimately prevents flagrant breaking of tribal taboos.

Causes of War

Of seventy-two recorded battles of the last twenty years in which members of Murngin factions were killed, fifty were for blood revenge —the desire to avenge the killing of a relative, usually a clansman, by members of another clan. Of these, fifteen were deliberate killings, against the tradition of what is fair cause for a war, and because it was felt that the enemies had killed the wrong people. Ten killings were due to stealing or obtaining by illegal means a woman who belonged to another clan. Five supposedly guilty magicians were killed by the clan members of victims of black magic. Five men were slain for looking at a totemic emblem under improper circumstances and thereby insulting the owning clan and endangering the clan's spiritual strength.

The idea underlying most Murngin warfare is that the same injury should be inflicted upon the enemy group that one's own group has suffered. This accomplished, a clan feels satisfied; otherwise, there is a constant compulsion toward vengeance, causing a continuous restlessness among those who are out to "buy back" the killing of one of their clansmen. The stealing of a woman provokes the same spirit, since the group feels itself injured; and only the return of the woman and a ceremonial fight, or the stealing of another woman, will satisfy the hurt to its self-esteem, unless the clan has retaliated by killing or wounding one of the enemy clansmen. The same feeling is instigated by the improper viewing of the totem—an insult and an injury to the entire clan.

Any of the above causes for war may be given deliberately or by accident, but in either case warfare is a certain consequence. If a young man chances upon an old man engaged in making a totemic emblem, the former is killed; or if a man is accidentally killed in a fight by a member of a friendly group, the dead man's people retaliate. There is, nevertheless, considerable feeling that an accident should not cause open hostilities, but it has small influence upon the public opinion of those who believe themselves injured.

There are a number of forms of ritualistic injury. If women look

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view of their totem. This was to put him off his guard; a few days later they ambushed and killed him. 688

If one of the members of a clan breaks a number of the ritualistic taboos he is seldom killed by members of his own clan. Usually the old men arrange for his death by members of another clan. If such offenses went unpunished the whole structure of Murngin society would fall to pieces, since in time the women and children would be aware of the secrets of the men's associations, and with the knowledge common, the ceremonial ideas would lose their significance. 688 696

Should a young man make a totemic emblem without the permission of the clan's ceremonial leader, the usual method of dealing with this insult to the clan would be to kill him. 688

The finding of the first wild bees' nest, because of its magical significance, is a very important matter to a young boy. Should an older man eat any of it or not allow the boy to consume the honey that was found, the father and father-in-law of the boy would start a camp fight with the man's group. 688 628

At the beginning of the dry season all the underbrush is burned off to secure better hunting, frequently destroying a log coffin. The dead man's clan is always offended, but killing seldom results, for the deed is felt to have been accidental, and no strong feeling surrounds the bones of a dead man. 688 673

The use of obscenity and profanity against a man always results in a camp fight. Profanity usually reflects not only on the man but on his clan and carries an incestuous connotation. Occasionally quarrels result from an unfair division of the game killed in the hunt, but not always open warfare, since those who feel they had a right to the game are near relatives whose solidarity is too strong to allow fighting. 578

Adulteries may cause a husband to give only his wife a thorough beating, but usually the lover is also held responsible and a fight is a consequence. The fights are ordinarily of the nirimaoi-yolno (a fight within the camp) type. If the lover attempts to steal her the more serious narrup (secret killing) and maringo (night attack on a camp) are used, because wife-stealing is a much more serious offense. 684

A number of customs attend these killings that serve as causes for war. When the body of a man killed in a fight or by magic is disinterred, the finger bones are given both to the near relatives of the victim's clan and to related groups as relics to remind them of their duty of blood vengeance. The relic is wrapped with fiber string and covered with beeswax and parrot feathers. It is placed at the bottom 765 628

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765 628 of the man's personal basket. A piece of a spear that has been broken off and left in the body of the victim is also used as a relic. When a man has been wounded he sometimes soaks pieces of paper bark in his blood and presents them to his relatives to be used as reminders of their duty to compensate him for his injury by helping him kill or wound a member of the offending man's clan. When a man obtains one of the relics, it is an almost absolute demand on him to kill a member of the slayer's group. This is particularly true if it is given to a young man. The older men usually give their relics to the younger males.

765 778 789 The spirit of the dead is supposed to go with the relic, and the relic has magic power. It can be thrown into an intended victim's fire and cause him to go to sleep, or the possessor can blow his breath against it and produce the same effect. It is often carried in the mouth during a battle to make an opponent tired and heavy-footed and to prevent him from dodging spears. Relics play a prominent part in all feuds.

682 Occasionally men are killed within the clan, but this is not a cause for war or retaliation by members of the clan or by near relatives from without the clan. A man may be such a notorious killer and cause so much trouble for his own clansmen that the entire group will kill him to stop further disturbances. At times men are slain by their own 688 clan for breaking ceremonial taboos, such as divulging secrets of the old men to the women or the uninitiated, and for viewing ceremonial objects before their initiation.

672 576 If a fight is on and a near relative is accidentally hit by a club or spear, the person responsible hits himself on the head while saying he is sorry. Here, too, the underlying idea is to inflict an injury on the responsible person similar to the one the injured party suffered.

152 577 Military honor also contributes its share to the causes for war. A man will brave the spears of a whole clan to demonstrate his fearlessness. The writer has seen two brothers defy fifteen men in a spear fight. The Murngin people are a brave and courageous group. Fear of death [626] while in a fight is seldom seen. A man who shows an unwillingness to fight is called a woman and held in extreme contempt.

628 681 181 181 The fundamental principle underlying all the causes of Murngin warfare is that of reciprocity: if a harm has been done to an individual or a group, it is felt by the injured people that they must repay the ones who have harmed them by an injury that at least equals the one they have suffered. When the total cultural situation of Murngin life is further examined, this negative reciprocation is found to fit into a

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up the tree. When I split it open the tree grew even bigger. I understood now, for this dead man I had killed had brought me here.

"When I went fighting that time I was a very young man. No one had told me that when one killed a man his spirit entered one's heart, but after I had killed him the old men asked me if I had seen a soul and I said no and asked them what they meant. They said, 'There is a very big meaning for that; it is something maraiin [spiritual, taboo, sacred].' I understood then what they meant. I began to look for it.

"When I took the honey from the tree there were about seven or eight baskets full. I did not take it home. I left it. I went back to the camp by myself. I said to the old men, 'I have found out there a very large honeybees' nest. I have left the honey at the tree.'

"Some of the old men said, 'Let us walk just a little way from the camp and we will have a talk.' When we had walked a short distance and had sat down one old man said to me, 'What have you done? Have you dreamed anything?'

" 'Yes,' I said, 'I dreamed, but I did not understand then. I do not believe its meaning. I was going about then like a fool. This crow came, went round and round, and sat on a tree. Even then I thought that crow flew for nothing. I did not believe this one. Then I looked and saw the honeybee fly this way and that. I think then maybe I better follow him. The bee had something white on its nose and looked all the same as a bird.' I then told the old men how I found the honeybees' nest and what happened. The old people said, 'All the members of the dead man's clan are going to hear about this, and they are going to be very angry.' "

It can be seen that this belief would furnish ample cause, if there were no others, for young men anxious to become strong and adult to go out and kill enemies of the clan.

Types of Armed Conflict

There are six distinct varieties of warfare among the Murngin. Each has a separate pattern of behavior and an individual name. In addition to these there is another form in which only the women participate. The names are nirimaoi yolno, a fight within the camp; naxrup or djawarlt, a secret method of killing; maringo (death adder), a night attack in which the entire camp is surrounded; milwerangel, a general open fight between at least two groups; gaingar (ghost spear), a pitched battle; and makarata, a ceremonial peace-making fight which is partly an ordeal. Each of the six forms will be described in detail.

In the seventy-two recorded engagements involving killings, twenty-nine men were slain by a gaingar fight, thirty-five by maringo, twenty-

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seven by narrup, three by milwerangel, and two by nirimaoi yolno. Although the last is the most frequent type of fight, it seldom results in killings; gaingar, on the other hand, has happened only twice in the last twenty years, yet it has accounted for the deaths of twenty-nine men.

The wooden or stone-headed spear, the spear-thrower and the club, as well as the stone knife, are used in these engagements. The spear is the chief weapon, although in camp fights clubs play a prominent part. The stone axe, which is primarily utilized as an implement, also serves as a weapon. No shield is found here. The Murngin depend on the spear thrower to ward off spears and on their well-developed agility to avoid thrusts. In all fights except the nirimaoi yolno and the narrup, the people coat themselves with war paint of white clay.

Nirimaoi Yolno

Nirimaoi fights are very frequent and are usually the result of quarrels caused by adultery or the husband's belief that someone has been attempting to make him a cuckold. The injured man goes to the camp of the lover and accuses him. He carries a bundle of spears and possibly a club with him. Words follow, swearing starts, and indignation is felt on both sides. Relatives of each contestant help him if the quarrel is felt to be very serious. The women usually attempt to hold the arms of the men to stop the fight from becoming too serious, meanwhile cursing the opponents of their brothers and husbands. At times, however, women pick up their digging sticks or a man's club and help their male relatives; very occasionally a woman is wounded and in certain very rare cases killed.

The nirimaoi yolno fight seldom results in anyone's being killed. Friends of both parties always stand back of the men and hit the spear-throwers or hold them when the fighters attempt to hurl their spears at each other. The contestants usually depend upon this and talk much "harder" (dal) to each other than they would if they knew that they were going to be allowed to have free play at each other. They increase their own sense of importance through the interest of others in their actions and possess a feeling that they are much braver warriors and are filled with a much more intense desire to kill than they would have if no one interfered. By remonstrating with their friends and struggling to get free from them, they are able to vent their outraged emotions and prove to the community that no one can infringe upon their rights without a valiant effort being made to prevent it. Obviously

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on some occasions there is a certain amount of bluff in the conduct of the contestants. The writer observed one nirimaoi yolno fight when, for some unaccountable reason, the contestants' friends did not attempt to hold them. They had counted on being restrained when they rushed at each other while hurling threats of death and covering each other with obscenity and profanity. When they reached each other no clubs were wielded or spears thrown; the men stood breast to breast and obviously felt a bit ridiculous. The usual results of the nirimaoi yolno are a few bruises, much obscenity, many threats, but few killings.

It must be borne in mind that members of a camp usually come from several clans, or fighting would never take place. Although the clan is undoubtedly involved in this variety of battle, the fight is almost always an individual affair, with a few of the combatants' relatives joining the fray. The nirimaoi yolno is also used as a kind of debate where angry men may air their fancied or actual grievances and state their position in controversial matters. This latter function is very important and is in most cases the primary basis of the nirimaoi yolno.

Narrup or Djawarlt

The narrup generally results in someone's being killed or badly injured. It is one of the most deadly forms of Murngin warfare for it occurs at night and by stealth. It is usually conducted by a few individuals who may be members of one clan, or by a party composed of members of one's own clan, the mother's clan, and the wife's group. Such relatives as gawel, waku, duć, galle, bapa, gatu, maraitcha, and marikmo are frequently members of this type of expedition.

The success of the narrup depends upon surprise. A man is usually attacked while sleeping. Warlumbopo's slaying of his brother's killer at Blue Mud Bay, Maiangula's killing of Kamata, and Natjimbui's killing of the Marderpa man in the feud described in this chapter are examples of the narrup night attack.

Although the narrup may be an individual affair, the entire clan is held responsible for the killing. The young men usually attempt to gain the sanction of their elders for a maringo expedition but do not feel they need to for the narrup, which is therefore a favorite fighting method. At times an old man may prefer to remain in the background and have a young man do his killing so that he will not be held as the one primarily responsible, and because of his desire for secrecy the other old men of the clan would not be consulted. The "pusher"

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(pidgin English word describing the instigator) is a social personality most prominent in the narrup warfare. When young men kill, everyone speculates on who did the "pushing," for it is always assumed that an old man is really responsible. Although not always true, it is a rule of pragmatic value for a clan to follow when meting out vengeance. Waltjimi, in the feud that is described in this chapter, is a good example of the "pusher" type of war personality, just as the old Darlwongo men are later the causes of the continuation of the feud when they "push" Natjimbui.

Maringo

The maringo (death adder) obtains its name both because of the snake-like formation of the attackers that surround the camp of the enemy and because of its deadliness. Killings or severe wounds always result.

When a maringo expedition to avenge the slaying of a clan's relative is decided upon, the following magical procedure is gone through before the warriors leave camp. Relics of the dead man are always carried by some of the relatives. The oldest man who holds one of these relics goes out into the bush some little distance from the camp and makes a fire and hut for himself. He draws the likeness of a man on the earth or molds it on the ground with his hands, giving it the name of the killer.

He then instructs a young man to go into the main camp and tell the old men, who organize themselves and go out in a body. They stop some little distance from where the old man and the image are camped. The leader sends two men ahead as spies. They pretend to look for the camp of the image, which represents their enemy's camp, and to discover if the "killer" is there.

Everyone in the group is as stealthily quiet as if he were on an actual expedition. The two young men sneak around the camp of the image. They return and announce that there is no one there and they could not find the "killer."

They sit down and say nothing. The others also remain quiet, unless they express regret that "he" has escaped and it is of no use to continue the expedition.

The two young men eat; when they have finished they pick up some pieces of white clay or other paint material and throw them into the ring of men. Everyone knows then that the image, the killer in this magical ritual, is there. The two leaders of the expedition divide

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628 789 their men into two groups; one side goes to the left of the camp of the image and the other to the right. They form a circle of spearmen about the camp. When the advancing leaders have met and the camp is completely surrounded, they ask if the "killer" is there, and use his name; and then, with shouts and cries, the expedition rushes in and throws its spears into the body of the image.

The above follows very closely the usual maringo fight of the blacks. If the expedition is successful the killer's body takes the place of the image, and possibly several of his relatives are also slain.

After the spears have been thrown into the image, the owner of the relic kneels on both knees beside it. He puts a piece of fire that has been taken from the camp fire into the image. He places his basket before his mouth; in the basket he has the relic, wrapped up in fiber string or paper bark, so that no profane eye can see it. He addresses the relic as follows: "Where is the killer?" There is no answer. He then starts naming the various possible places where the slayer could be found and asks the relic, which has the spirit of the dead man, where the enemy is. The naming of place is continued until a kind of click is heard. This is supposed to come from the bone and is in answer to the question.

The owner of the relic says, "Ah, that is the place." He once more addresses the relic: "You are not lying to me? You are telling me the truth?" The click is heard again. Next day the avenging expedition sets out and goes to the place designated to kill the slayer of their relative. It is thought that such an expedition must be successful after the ritual has been performed.

773 The best description of a maringo can be found in the following myth from the Durili people of Cape Grey, which tells of a night attack made by the snakes against a certain clan. It conforms to the accounts of the modern maringo fighting and in addition gives the idealized form according to the best native standards.

"The people were catching fish in the creek. They had caught a lot of fish with a line [for hooks the Murngin used nails from planks that were brought in on the tide]. While some of the men were catching fish others were busy making a fire. They burned the bones and scales in the fire. An eastern wind came up.

"A small blue-tongued lizard [Dua moiety] who was in the nearby bush smelt the fish bones cooking. 'Ah,' he said, 'they are cooking fish; I shall go.'

"He came close; he ate the bones and scales. The men got up. 'What is this?' they said. They had never seen a blue-tongued lizard before, for

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ing distance, and once more spears are thrown at them, but this time there is an effort made actually to strike them, since now they represent the enemies, whereas in the morning they represented the challenging clan. The spears are then sent by messenger to the enemy. They are a ceremonial invitation for battle. The enemy goes through the same ceremony if it decides to accept. The two parties then meet halfway between their respective territories.

Short spears are used in the gaingar because they can be thrown from any position and are difficult to parry or avoid. The two lines of warriors stand about fifty feet apart. Leadership is almost completely absent after the fight starts. Trickery is used if possible. In the gaingar that was held in the Goyder River district, the sea people who challenged the men from the interior hid part of their forces on each side of the plain in a mangrove jungle. They placed a small party down at the forward end of the plain for the advancing people to see. As the enemy advanced this small group retreated to the jungle growth at the far end. They thus enticed their antagonists into the avenue of hidden warriors. The sea people then surrounded those from the interior and killed a large number.

Makarata

The makarata is a ceremonial peacemaking fight. It is a kind of general duel and partial ordeal which allows the aggrieved parties to vent their feelings by throwing spears at their enemies or by seeing the latter's blood run in expiation.

Frequently the makarata does not follow the ideal pattern; instead of providing a peacemaking mechanism, it produces only another battle in the interminable blood feud of the clans.

When sufficient time has elapsed after an injury or death of a member for the clan's emotions to calm, the men send a message to their enemies saying they are ready for a makarata. The other side usually agrees to enter into this peacemaking ceremony, although there is always suspicion of treachery. The injured group always sends the invitation, and the other must wait for them to decide when they wish to have it. Frequently makarata are held after some of the totemic ceremonies have taken place, since it is at this time that most of the clans will be present. When the warriors of the injured clan or clans arrive on the dueling ground they are covered with white clay. They dance in, singing a song which is descriptive of the water of their totemic well. The other side has also painted itself. The two sides stand a little

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more than spear-throwing distance apart, and each is so situated that it has a mangrove jungle back of it for protection in case the makarata becomes a real fight and it is necessary to take cover. The clan which considers itself injured performs the dance connected with its chief totem. It is of the garma or non-sacred variety. The Warumeri clan, for instance, would dance the garawark (mythological fish) totemic dance; the Djirin clan would perform its shark dance. The challenging group dances over to its antagonists, stops, and without further ceremony walks back to its own side. After the men have reformed their ranks, their opponents dance toward them, using the latter's totemic dance for this military ritual. They return to their own side and reform their line to make ready for the actual duel.

The men who are supposed to have "pushed" the killers then start running in a zigzag in the middle of the field, facing their opponents. They are accompanied by two close relatives who are also near kin of the other side. The function of the latter runners is to deter the aggrieved clan from throwing spears with too deadly an intent for fear of hitting their kin, and to help knock down spears which might hit the "pushers." The "pushers" are made a target for spears whose stone heads have been removed. Every member of the clan or clans which feels itself injured throws at least once at the runners. When an individual's turn to throw arrives he advances from the group and moves toward the runners. If he feels very strongly he continues throwing spears until he has chased the runners into the jungle. This action is repeated by the more indignant members of the offended clan three or four times. The injured clan curses the members of the other group; the offending group cannot reply, for this is supposed to add additional insult; they must run and say nothing. Finally, when their emotions have subsided to a considerable extent, one of the older men of the offended group says that they have had enough and the spear throwing stops.

After the "pushers," the actual killers run. The spear head is not removed from the shaft; the throwers continue hurling their spears, at first as a group and finally as individuals, until they have exhausted their emotions. While all this is taking place, the old men of both sides walk back and forth from one group to the other, telling the throwers to be careful and not kill or hurt anyone. The offending clan's old men ask the younger men to be quiet and not to become angry, and when they hear insults thrown at them not to reply or throw spears since

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628 887 they are in the wrong. When the old men of the injured clan feel that they have sated their anger as a group they call out to the young men to stop, and each man then throws singly at the killers. He may throw as long as he pleases.

628 535 When this part of the ceremony has been completed, the whole offending group dances up to the other, and one of the latter jabs a spear through the thighs of the killers. If this happens it means that no further retaliatory action will be taken. The killers can feel free to go into the country of their enemies without fear of injury. If only a slight wound is made the offenders know they are not forgiven and the truce is only temporary. Sometimes no wound is made at all. This acts as a direct statement of the offended clan's intention to wreak vengeance on the other side.

After the wound has been made the two sides dance together as one group to prove their feeling of solidarity and to express ritually that they are not openly warring groups, but one people. They also perform the usual water dance.

628 The above is the idealized form of the makarata. If all goes well, this procedure is followed through until the end, and the makarata's purpose is fulfilled. The following things can happen to turn the makarata into a real fight: (1) the old men may not have enough power to keep their young men in control; (2) the offending side may start swearing or throwing spears, which immediately turns the whole performance into a fight; (3) one of the runners may be badly wounded, which is likely to stimulate his clan members to attack the other side; (4) treachery may be resorted to; (5) the accidental wounding of an outsider may sometimes result; and (6) a member of either side may deliberately throw a spear into the other group because he is anxious to start a general fight.

Women's Fights

578 Brawls in which only women are engaged are fairly frequent. The fights usually take place between two women, almost always because a young woman has seduced another's husband. Occasionally more than two women are involved, sisters taking sides with their kin; or several wives of one man may attack his sweetheart, in which case the latter usually calls upon her own relatives for help. The women's ironwood digging sticks are the usual weapons, although if a man's club is within reach the women often use it. They strike each other on the head. The fights are of such intensity that bloodshed always results.

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Wergild

The conception of wergild is present among the Murngin, but it is very poorly developed and seldom solves the problem of terminating a feud. Whenever a war is in actual progress there is always talk by the offending party of sending food, which usually consists of palm nut bread, to the injured group. The person who has inflicted the injury is the one who is supposed to send it to the nearest relative of the deceased or to the man who has been wounded. Tobacco is also a favorite article sent for the wergild. If the man who receives the bread eats it or if he smokes the tobacco, it is a sign that he has accepted the payment, that the blood feud is terminated, and there will be no further retaliation as far as he is concerned. Every member of the clan, as well as the near kin of other clans, must also eat of this food or smoke the tobacco to make the wergild effective. This is almost always an impossibility and as a consequence the wergild is hardly ever a success. The chief basis of its ineffectiveness is that the solidarity of the clan group is interfered with by the operation of the kinship system; if clan members alone were concerned, it is likely that all frequently could and would enter into the ritual of eating the bread or smoking the tobacco.

History of a Clan Feud

Some twenty years ago a Darlwongo clansman and a Warumeri clansman both desired a woman of the Djapu group. A fight resulted and the Warumeri man was killed. The triangular arrangement of these particular clans, two of the Yiritja moiety competing for women of the Dua Djapu clan whose territories lie between the two competing groups, has always been in existence and reflects itself even in the folklore. The death of the Warumeri clansman not only procured the woman for the Darlwongo but added one more mark to the score of the interminable blood feud that also has always been a part of the relationship of the two clans.

Two or three years later one of Warlumbopo's eldest brother's sons, of the Bringel clan and Ritarngo tribe, killed a Darlwongo man to "buy back" the dead Warumeri, because "he remembered his black duck totem." The story of the black duck ranga (totem) which relates the Warumeri and Bringel groups in mythological times is given the credit for this solidarity by the natives; but, although it does give a splendid rationalization in the tribal system of thought for such an alliance, it is not the real explanation; the Darlwongo are perhaps even more closely related by myth to their enemies than they are to their friends. Actually, the antagonism of the Warumeri and Bringel against the same clan, with the lack of rivalry

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628 for women, has made them very friendly, and there is a considerable solidarity in the activities of the two groups.

A few years following the last killing recounted here, Warlumbopo's brother and his son, Danginbir, went up to the Marderpa clan's highland country for a visit. They were taking the usual route to the Blue Mud Bay seacoast. When they arrived an old Marderpa man told his sons, "You go kill Danginbir's father." He wanted this done because the father-in-law of [765] the Darlwongo who had been killed had sent him as a present a red parrot belt made from the hair of the dead man. It was maraiin, had as much power as a totemic emblem, and was therefore taboo and feared. The old Marderpa felt ashamed when he saw it, since no one had avenged the death of the owner of the hair; he made the Darlwongo quarrel his own. (It is highly likely that there was already a considerable background of antagonism between the Marderpa and the enemies of the Darlwongo.)[4]

He took Danginbir to a paper-bark tree jungle on an expedition for yams. The young Marderpa accompanied the father on another route.

The old Marderpa, Kamata by name, sharpened his axe. It, too, had been the property of the dead Darlwongo and had later been transferred to the father-in-law, now deceased, who in turn had sent it as further pressure on the Marderpa to help him avenge the taking of his son-in-law's life by killing the Ritarngo.

As Kamata sharpened his axe, Danginbir grew suspicious. He asked, "Why are you sharpening that tomahawk?"

"I am going to look for a wild bees' nest," said Kamata.

It was late morning and they had already gathered some yams and killed some small game. They made a fire and cooked and ate their food. They slept.

The Marderpa only pretended to sleep, and when everyone else was deep in slumber he stealthily arose and hit Danginbir on the back of the neck. He severed Danginbir's head from his body. The Marderpa threw the head and body into the river.

Meanwhile the boy's father and the other Marderpa had gathered a good quantity of yams. A Marderpa picked up his spear and said, "I am going to look for some kangaroo. You pick up the yams and take them back to camp." He hooked his spear to his spear-thrower, and while the man who was carrying the yams walked toward camp he sneaked up behind him and speared him in the back. He did not succeed in killing him, for the wounded man dropped his burden and ran toward camp. The Marderpa stopped and picked up the yams that were dropped and did not follow. When the old man arrived in camp he said, "Where is my son?"

Someone said, "He has been killed."

[4] There is less information recorded by the writer on this matter because the Marderpa group lay at the farther end of the Murngin country.

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"Well," said he, "it can't be helped. I can do nothing, for my son started it first." He collected his wives and belongings and said, "We will go now. I think this wound will kill me before I get home."

After they had walked for several days he felt too ill to continue his journey.

"When I die," he said, "you wives put me in my grave and go straight to Warlumbopo [his younger brother] and tell him what has happened to his elder brother."

Shortly after he had spoken, Warlumbopo walked into the dying man's camp. He cried and cried. Then the old man raised himself to a sitting position. He danced the dance of the black duck totem flying home, for he remembered his totemic water hole and he wanted his soul to go straight to it when it left his body, and then he fell back dead.[5]

Warlumbopo said, "I won't show my sorrow now. I will go buy you back first, my brother." He did not bury his brother, and he told the wives of the deceased not to bury him. He picked up his spears and basket and went away. He went down to the Blue Mud Bay country where the Marderpa people had gone after his brother had left them. He went over to Woodah Island. It was daytime.

The Marderpa people saw him. They conferred together. "We must kill him too," they said. They got ready. Groote Eylandt and Barlamomo people were also there. Warlumbopo walked straight into the camp as though nothing had happened. All the men of the camp hooked up their spears. "Why have you people got your spears hooked up? What is the matter?" He pretended he knew nothing.

"Haven't you heard anything?" someone said.

"No," he replied. "I have come down here to hunt for emu."

The old Marderpa man who had killed his brother sang the water of the Ritarngo well and the water of the Marderpa clan's well, then he said the dead man's name. "We killed him and his son," he said.

"Oh," said Warlumbopo, "and a good thing it was, too. He was a wakinu [without relatives and asocial]. I have a spear mark from him too." He showed a scar upon his leg (from an engagement with an enemy, not from his brother).

Warlumbopo painted himself for a makarata peacemaking ceremony, and so did the old men of the Marderpa group. They went out to the dueling ground. Two old men and two boys ran for Warlumbopo to throw his spears at them. He took the stone heads out of his spears and threw two shafts at them.

[5] All clansmen perform this death ceremony. A Wangurri would dance and call out his Garawark, the son of Barrimundi; and a Liaalaomir man would dance the great python and imitate the thunder of his totem.

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628 "All right," he said, "I am satisfied. My brother was no good, and I cannot be angry."

The four men came up for him to spear the man who had done the killing. "No," said Warlumbopo, "I don't want to spear your leg. I am through." (He did not want to take this action which is symbolical of finishing a feud, so that he could kill the man at a later date.)

"No," said the man, "you spear my leg."

Warlumbopo took his spear head and just broke the skin of his enemy. He wanted the latter to think that it did not mean very much to him, but inwardly it signified that he intended to kill him later.

They all went back to camp. He slept there with them that night. The Marderpa men watched him, for they believed he might be pretending and they were too wise not to know that all the people in the north resort to trickery whenever it is possible. Warlumbopo remained quiet. He stayed there for over a week and did nothing. He carried only one spear to keep suspicion down. It was a big red stone spear. He put a longer shaft to it. The fact that he carried only one spear served partially to quiet the suspicions of his enemies, for ordinarily when there is trouble a man carries a large bundle of them.

One night when it was dark he slept nearer the main camp. The camp dogs came in from their places in the surrounding bush. They were nosing about the refuse while they hunted for turtle bones. Two dogs became engaged in a noisy fight over a bone. One of them was Warlumbopo's. While they were howling he picked up his spear and started calling the dog's name, "Latera!" (also the name of the stones around his clan well), and running toward the dogs, which brought him to the side of the old man who had killed his brother. The old Marderpa was awakened by the noise and raised up on his elbow. As he did this, Warlumbopo shoved his spear downward into the man's gullet. He started running again, calling for his dog as he went across to the mainland on the sand bank that connects the island with it during low tide. When he was out of the firelight's glow in the darkness of the surrounding bush he stopped and called back to the [195] Marderpa, "You people do not know what is at the bottom of new spring water."[6]

Warlumbopo went back into the bush to the camp of his dead brother. The body had swollen. It was very large. The wives of the dead man were still there. He dug a hole and rolled the body into it, covered it, and went back to his Ritarngo country with the wives. When he arrived home he

[6] This cryptic, rather epigrammatic remark, with a touch of sardonic humor about it, very typical of Murngin thought, refers to the fact that every year, after the long wet season is past and the flood waters have gone, new fresh-water springs are found and it is always a matter of speculation from where they come. Warlumbopo had likened himself to a spring and the cause of his arrival in the Marderpa camp to the underground source of a spring's water supply.

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sang the water song of their clan well to another older brother, Daurlung, and thereby told him of their elder brother's death, since the name of the dead is taboo. Daurlung cried. After he had finished he said, "We will get all our Ritarngo people and go fight the Marderpa." 628

"No," said Warlumbopo. He had not told his brother of what he had done to avenge their older brother's death, because he believed Daurlung was a good friend to the man he had killed, and he wanted first to tell the whole story. When Daurlung heard that his friend (a distant tribal younger brother) had not tried to save the lives of his own brother and son, he was very angry. He said, "We will go kill that one first."

Warlumbopo said quietly, "You cannot kill him now."

"Why?"

"He is dead."

"Who killed him?"

"I did."

"My own brother!" said Daurlung. "Good! I shall give you two of my wives." He then gave Warlumbopo two of his wives to show his appreciation.

This ends the episode of Blue Mud Bay.

Meanwhile rivalry for women among certain clans had caused another feud to continue between the Djirin and the Naladaer on one side and the Gwiyula on the other. The Daiuror clan, which is closely related to the former two by marriage, always sided with them in a dispute, but the Gwiyula usually had much the best of the fighting for their clan had two of the most feared and deadly fighters, known throughout the tribes of the eastern Arafura Sea. They are Parpar and Drona (the kangaroo-legged one), who has a deformed leg.

Parpar, about fifteen years ago, killed Djingaran, a Djirin clansman, the father of Maiangula, for revenge in a narrup fight. Maritja, a son of Djingaran's brother and a member of the Djirin clan, a few years later killed a Gwiyula in a maringo fight. Parpar and Drona then killed several Naladaer people, including Ginda, the brother of Berundais, who will be mentioned with Maiangula a little later in this story. They also wounded Waltjimi, a member of the Daiuror clan.

They put the corpse of Berundais' brother in a tree. Djowa and a number of his people some few months later cleaned the bones and took them away. Djowa found the spear head with the skeleton. He wrapped it with paper bark and fiber string, as is always done with such relics, and put it in his basket. All the members of the party that gathered the bones received one or more small bones as relics. 628 765

Djowa and Berundais kept the spear in their baskets. A short time after this they conferred and decided to transfer it to someone else. They gave it to Watia (Liagaomir clan). Watia kept the relic for a considerable period

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628 of time and finally, tired of having it in his possession, presented it to
765 Bengaliwe (Djirin clan). He said, "This comes from Drona and Parpar. You can do something about this, for I am tired." Time passed and Bengaliwe also lost interest in the relic. The killing had occurred so long before the time of his possession that it did not have great emotional interest for him. He even considered throwing it away, but it still remained in his personal basket. One day Balliman (Djirin clan) looked into his relative's basket. He saw the relic wrapped in the fiber string and, since he was still a very young man, his curiosity was aroused to the point of his asking Bengaliwe what it meant. Bengaliwe said, "That belongs to you people. It comes from Parpar's brother." Since the Naladaer and Djirin clansmen are considered more or less one people, for the Naladaer has a very undifferentiated existence from the Djirin, the statement of Bengaliwe was true.

Balliman's interest was aroused. He was a natural fighter, and always keen on organizing an expedition to fight someone, no matter what the cause. He went to his near brother, a member of the Djirin clan, Maiangula, and said, "I have something here for you. It is an old gatu [son]. It belongs to us. The spear that killed him is in Bengaliwe's basket." Maiangula, a large man of a more or less even temperament, said, "What do you think we had better do? Do you think we ought to steal it away from Bengaliwe? He can't go fight them for that. His people are too near relatives to them for him to fight Parpar and Drona. They are like one people."

Maiangula then went to see Bengaliwe and was given the relic.

628 Maiangula had been a small boy when his father was killed, so he had done nothing at the time to avenge his father's death. About three years before he received the relic from Bengaliwe and about two years after the killing of Ginda, the Naladaer, Waltjimi, the war leader of the Daiuror group, who was Maiangula's father-in-law, said to the young man, "You have a spear head, Maiangula, that was found in the body of Ginda when we painted his body with red ocher and took it from the tree. He was my waku [son-in-law]. You go kill Parpar and Drona and I will give you one of my daughters for a present to become your wife."

628 After a conference, Maritja, the leader of the Djirin, agreed to head the
672 party. He agreed to go on the expedition only after he had stipulated that Parpar and Drona be the only two men killed, since they were such notorious killers that there was a general feeling among the older men throughout north Arnhem Land that the clan to which the two belonged should not be held responsible for their behavior. This feeling, however, became uppermost in the minds of the old men only at those times when they were most philosophical and there had been no recent slaying, for during their more emotional states they felt that the whole clan should be destroyed. Maiangula and the younger men, although agreeing to this

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consideration of Maritja, were out to kill for blood vengeance and did not concern themselves with whether to kill Parpar and Drona or other members of their clan. In the war party which left in search of Parpar and Drona were Maritja (Djirin), Balliman (Djirin), Maiangula (Djirin), Djowa (Daiuror), Berundais (Naladaer), as well as many other members of the three clans. The first two were actual brothers, and the third a classificatory brother of the first two, since his father was a brother of their father. Djowa was a son of Waltjimi's older brother.

Narnarngo, a Liagaomir clansman who had reared Parpar when the latter's father's father died, heard of the expedition and dispatched Kamata[7] and Gurnboko, the first a Bringel and the second a Gwiyula, to warn Parpar of his danger. They joined the camp where the others were staying. The information spread among the war party that these new people were going to warn Parpar. The younger men immediately decided among themselves to give up the expedition and kill Kamata and Gurnboko. The leader, Maritja, a much older man than the others, attempted to prevent this but failed.

Maiangula, the leader of the younger men, said, "Narnarngo, who knows all the news, talks too much; he has found out we are going to kill Parpar and Drona. Parpar is a 'son' of Narnarngo. These two men here we can kill now. They are close enough relatives to those others for us to kill them even though they are a little bit 'far off' in their relationship. Because they are a little far, we will not tell Maritja. He is an old man and understands too much, and he will know that we are doing something a little bit wrong. I cannot think that way in my head; I think too much about my father. This young man is a brother that belongs to Parpar; he is close enough."

Maritja knew from the behavior of the younger men that they were plotting the death of the two young men. He said, "I have lived a long time. I saw the old men and the way they acted before you young men were born. I have seen them grow very quiet and their bodies look like they were dead when they were filled inside with a desire to fight. I have seen myself that way. It is better that we go back to our camp. If we stay here you will kill somebody who is not a close enough relative to Parpar and Drona, who killed our relatives."

He warned the prospective victims of their danger and asked them to leave immediately, but they were too young fully to believe him. When it was dusk, the three young men, Maiangula, Balliman and Berundais, formed a camp by themselves against the old men's protests. It was behind a large pandanus palm tree, about eight or ten feet away from the others. Maritja, to make sure that no harm would fall upon the young Gwiyula

[7] This younger Kamata must not be confused with the first one who was killed in the earlier part of the history here related.

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628 and his companion, had them sleep beside him. After a time they all went to sleep. Maritja felt something in his hair. He raised up, sat down by the fire; he said to his young charges, "Don't you go to sleep now. Something was walking about in my hair. I think it was sent to warn me. Maybe it was a spirit to tell me that somebody would get speared tonight." He talked very loudly for everyone to hear, in the hope that it might frighten the younger men and prevent them from carrying out their plot. Everyone remained quiet.

[825 187] A little bird (willy wagtail) lost its footing in a nearby tree and fluttered about in the branches. Maritja knew then that something was going to happen. "That bird," he said to the young men, "is telling us a story. He has always come and told us black men when trouble and spearmen were around. Then that one walked in my hair; that meant something. I think you boys had better go. I think something is going to happen."

Kamata, one of the young men, said, "No, we will stay here. I am going to lie down. I want to go to sleep."

The young men lay down and Maritja put his legs over the body of the smaller one. Presently Maritja and the two boys were in a deep sleep. By this time it was late. The moon was high in the sky. When the moon had gone down and it was very dark, Balliman and Maiangula awakened. Maiangula said, "You, Balliman, you go kill Gurlbaiili. You, Djowa, you go kill Kamata. I am going to kill Gurnboko." Balliman and Maiangula arose, but Djowa remained quiet. Balliman with Berundais sneaked up to Gurlbaiili's camp. Djowa, meanwhile, had placed his spear in the fire to make it hot so that he could straighten it, and because it would cut better when he tried to kill the sleeping man. While this was occurring, Maiangula removed the steel blade from his spear and sharpened it. He sneaked up on Kamata himself with the spear head in his hand and sank it into the latter's jugular vein. Maiangula then turned his attention to the second man, but he was nervous and attempted to dispatch him too quickly. Instead of hitting him in the gullet, he struck his side. The young man who was wounded started crying, "Mother, Mother, Mother." Balliman, meanwhile, in attempting to approach near enough to Gurlbaiili to sink his spear into him, had run into a pandanus patch, which was around the sleeping man's camp, and because of its thickness and the sharpness of the thorns, he was unable to get through it. He walked around the edge of the pandanus trying to find a path, but just before he was near enough to stab him he heard the thud of the spear entering the small boy's body; he was afraid, and he and Berundais ran away.

In the morning the news of the killing was carried to the nearby camps. Raiola, a brother of the slain man, arrived with some of his kinsmen. Raiola cursed Maiangula and started fighting with him, but when he saw Berundais he thought that this man was probably to blame for the killing,

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since he believed that it was Berundais who had given Maiangula the relic. He struck Berundais on the head with a club. Maritja, although a very near relative of Berundais, commanded his people not to fight Raiola because he had a right to attack them, since one of his relatives had been slain. Dimala was then attacked by Raiola because he was a brother-in-law of Maiangula's. They fought with knives, but because of the intervention of their mutual friends and relatives, neither of them was hurt. Maiangula and the killers meanwhile had hidden in the bush.

After things had quieted and the general camp brawl which had resulted from the slaying had ceased, the inevitable series of discussions commenced among the various old men who had gathered from the clans to determine just what was back of the killing and to attempt to find out if anyone had "pushed" the younger men. The opinions were very divergent upon the actual motivation, but it was felt by all that Maiangula had killed a man who was too far removed from his real enemies, Parpar and Drona. There was also a secondary sentiment that Maiangula's father had been too long dead for Maiangula to retaliate. It was also believed by most of the men that some older man, probably Waltjimi, had directed him to kill the boy, for Waltjimi was a bitter enemy of the Bringel clan. The wounding of the younger man was not so severely criticized, for he was near enough in relationship to Parpar. The chief fault found with his wounding was that he was too young, so that even this attempt to avenge his father's death was held against Maiangula.

After a week or more, when Raiola with his relatives had gone back into the interior to their clan's territory and the general excitement had died down considerably, it was decided to send a messenger from the camp of the Djirin and Naladaer peoples to the Giwiyula to discover what their feelings were about the matter and to attempt to arrange a makarata to settle matters. Birindjaoi was chosen to go because it was thought he would not be hurt by the other side, since he had near relatives among them.[8] Baerwit, the recognized leader of the Ritarngo clans, was the unofficial head of the group of clansmen who had gathered by a small lake in the interior country. Birindjaoi met Raiola, who was his friend. All of the men's bodies were painted with white clay to show that they were on the warpath. He and Raiola went over to the part of the camp where the Ritarngo were situated. They took tobacco and food to Baerwit. He invited them to sit down. Birindjaoi, who distrusted Baerwit, said that he preferred to stand. Three of the young Ritarngo were standing with their spears ready to throw them. They were all blood sons of Baerwit.

The older leader picked up a paper-bark water basin and invited the messenger to have a drink of fresh water. The latter realized it was

[8] He was identified also with the Crocodile Island mission.

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trickery, and that he was attempting to get him to bend his face down so that his sons could spear him, so he said he was not thirsty and that he had decided to leave. Baerwit said, "Before you go I want to make my people one in a makarata. They are three groups now." Birindjaoi said, "Yes, you do that so that we won't have a lot of spear troubles." The Djinba and Ritarngo peoples who were under Baerwit's leadership stood up and looked meaningly at each other; but the other group, the Gunalbingi, stood up and looked at the ground, which indicated they were not at one with the others in their plot to kill Birindjaoi. While they stood there a white light seemed to play all over his body like the reflection of the sun's light in a pool. Raiola noticed that Birindjaoi's body seemed to change. The light came and went several times. The first time that it came it was a spirit to warn him and Raiola that trouble was there for them. The former did not see it, but Raiola did. Raiola saw it like the flash of lightning in a dark night, and it made him shut his eyes.

Birindjaoi said again to Baerwit, "Go ahead and make these people one."

Baerwit said, "My legs are tired. You go ahead and we will come behind you."

Birindjaoi said, "No, we will walk together."

Raiola and he walked together. Raiola talked to him in a distant language which the others could not understand. He said, "They don't understand me in this language. I saw three lights shine on you. I know now those men want to hurt you." The group of men meanwhile had been walking toward a wooded plain. When they were very near it Baerwit started walking rapidly toward the two. He cried out to his chief fighter, "Tjari, you run and catch Raiola. We cannot hurt him; he belongs to our own people, but he will fight if we try to spear Birindjaoi." The group of clansmen formed around them. An old man, who was a near relative to Birindjaoi, quietly stood up beside him and put his abdomen against his back so that no one could spear him when he was not looking. Raiola, before this had happened, had given him a spear, and Blumberi, also a relative by marriage to Birindjaoi, had presented him with a spear-thrower. Raiola then turned to Baerwit. He said, "You think you are going to kill him? You kill him and I will kill one of your men. No, I won't kill one; I shall kill two. Birindjaoi is a messenger man and you have no right to kill him. You are doing wrong. All right; I will do wrong and kill people who are near to me."

Tjari ran at Birindjaoi with his spear pointed at him. Raiola turned upon him with his spear, as did Birindjaoi. Tjari moved back into his group. One of the Djinba warriors threw a spear at Birindjaoi when he was not looking. The old man called out in time for him to grab the spear before it hit him. Raiola threw a spear at his attacker and caught the latter in the thigh. The man fell on his knee and from this position

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threw at Raiola and missed him. The two men, while the attack was being made against them, had hurried toward the river which flowed in the middle of the wooded plain. They ran; spears were thrown at them, but they were not hit. Their enemies in an attempt to stop their running and prevent their escape, held in their mouths bones of men, for it is believed that the spirits of the dead do all in their power to help those who are supposed to be avenging their deaths. The men ran faster. They jumped in the river and swam for the other side. It was dusk by this time and difficult to see them. They swam until they came to a mangrove jungle. They lay within it until morning. 628

After the two left, the Ritarngo, Djinba and Gunalbingu people heard that the Rainbarngo, Wulaki, and Yandjinung tribes were coming to fight them. This latter group of tribes live along the western border of the others.

The report was true, and when the westerners were within some distance of the eastern group the latter hid in the paper-bark swamp until their enemies were close to them. They arose and chased them but hit no one. One of the enemy was captured. They turned him loose, and as he ran away they threw spears at him. Two of them mortally wounded him. The emotions of all the people were deeply affected, and the general lust to kill was felt by all of them. Baerwit and his group turned upon their allies, the Djinba, who, being in the minority, ran away. Baerwit then turned upon the Gunalbingu to slake his desire for killing, but they too were afraid and retreated to their own country. It is unlikely that anyone would have been killed, since the three groups were too closely related.

A few weeks later, when interest in the blood feud had quieted and emotions were no longer at fever heat, a great makarata was held. Raiola and other Ritarngo, Djinba, Warumeri and one Wangurri were against Maiangula and his clan. Just before the rainy season had arrived and a few months after Maiangula had killed the young Kamata, his gawel [mother's brother], Minyipiriwi, came to the grave, opened it with the aid of several others, cleaned the bones, painted them, placed them in a paper-bark container, and took them back to the Bringel clan's country. He gave one of the smaller bones to Natjimbui, a Djirin, as he did to all the Ritarngo. Natjimbui was a clansman of Maiangula, which made it irregular for him to receive this relic, but the Djirin clan had always been friendly with the Bringel.

Natjimbui, because he belonged to the same clan, could not kill one of his own clansmen, and had no desire to inflict an injury on his own group, but he did feel compulsion to do something for the Bringel, since they were friends of his. He took the bone and started for the Marderpa country to kill the slayer of Kamata's brother. On his way he went through the

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Darlwongo country and found the Marderpa man who, many years ago, had cut Danginbir's head off (see page 178).

Two Darlwongo men approached Natjimbui and told him that this Marderpa man chased them with spears while they were preparing to make their honeybee totem. This is a great crime among the Murngin and a deliberate insult to the totem of the clan. Because of this they were forced to take the string from off the emblem and put it back in their baskets, since the emblem would have lost its efficacy had they continued making it after this occurrence.

Natjimbui the next morning went to look for food. He was followed again by the two Darlwongo old men. When they had penetrated into a nearby jungle for some distance they came upon Natjimbui digging yams. Once more they said to him, "That Marderpa man chased us with spears while we were making our totem. Don't you feel sorry for your mother?" (Their totemic emblem was called mother by Natjimbui because his mother was the nearest relative through whom he could trace his relationship to it.)

"Yes, I will do it. I do not forget my mother. I will do it tonight."

When night came the married men of the camp gave food to the single men. Everyone sat down at dusk and sang and talked. The Marderpa man was suspicious and did not trust the Darlwongo clansmen. He said out loud, for all the camp to hear, "I am all the same as a kangaroo. I sit up all night and watch."

Natjimbui sat down in the main camp. He did not sleep; he too watched. Hours went by. He grew tired of waiting and reached in his basket and took out the bone of the dead man. He unwrapped the paper bark from the relic and cut the bone in half. He wrapped one half and placed it once more in his basket. He held the other in his hand. He was far enough away from the Marderpa and other members of the camp so that no one could see what he was doing.

Natjimbui arose and walked over and sat down at the fire beside the Marderpa man. He started talking to him. While they talked he threw small stones into the fire, then he pretended to pick up a stone to throw, but instead of the stone he threw the bone into the fire. He was sure then that the Marderpa would soon be sleeping, since this was done to make the spirit come out of the bone and act upon the Marderpa in such a way that he would be easy to kill. By and by the Marderpa boy said, "I am very sleepy. I think I will go to sleep." They both lay down. Natjimbui continued talking. He asked questions, after some little time, to see if anyone would answer him. No one did. They were all asleep. He stealthily rubbed his spear with the other part of the relic to make it go straight and kill quickly, for he knew that the spirit would guide his spear. He hooked up his spear and pointed at the Marderpa, but too many small boys were sleeping around the man. He took his leg and pushed

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the young boys to one side. He held his spear in his hand and shoved it into the other man's abdomen. 628

The wounded man groaned and cried, "What is wrong?"

"Danginbir! You remember him, don't you? He was the one whose head and body you threw in the water."

General confusion prevailed in the camp. Everyone cried, "Why did you do that?"

"This one [the man he had just killed], a long time ago, killed that little boy's [Kamata's] brother. He [Kamata] had no older brother to look out for him and he was killed. This bone I have in my hand brought him back. It was just as if that little brother [Kamata] had opened my mind when he died, for I forgot that big brother. I thought about him now."

After the excitement had died, everyone said, "That is too long ago for a young man like Natjimbui to think about it. It is much too long. He did not think for that far back."

Several of the older men turned to the two old Darlwongo and said, "We think that you told that young man something." They emphatically denied it, as old men always do when they have "pushed" young men into a killing. While everyone was talking and shouting and the relatives of the man who had been speared were wailing, the Marderpa men of the camp tried to make a ring of spearmen around Natjimbui. Natjimbui edged out of the group so that no one was at his back. "You people stand back there," he said. "If you come close I will kill another one of you." They stood back. "You people sleep over there," continued Natjimbui, "I will sleep over here away from you. Tomorrow morning I will come out for you." (This meant that he would run before them in a makarata.)

The two old men went with him so that he could sleep. In the morning he painted himself, as did the Marderpa; he ran before the Marderpa, with the two old men accompanying him. They chased him inside a mangrove jungle. This was done a number of times. Finally they grew tired and the old men of the Marderpa clan said that they had had enough.

Natjimbui danced the net dance, which symbolized his catching the soul of the man who had been killed. After that he put his leg out to have it stabbed, but the Marderpa refused. 535

They buried the body, left the Darlwongo country, and after one night's camp arrived in the Ciwiyula territory. Natjimbui accompanied them. When they had buried the Marderpa man a Kalpu man had cut the armlets off the Marderpa. When Natjimbui arrived here he said that he was going to leave them and go to the Crocodile Islands. The father of Gurnboko (the young man wounded by Maiangula) said, "No. Let us wait and sleep here tonight. We will all go tomorrow."

That afternoon omens of ill luck appeared to Natjimbui. His spear fell down and the stone head broke. Probably a mokoi (evil ghost) tried 628 787

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628 [787] to break this spear. If a man's feather headdress or parrot-feather arm streamers fall off during the war period, it is a mokoi's doing.

The Kalpu man knocked off little pieces from the edge of his stone spear head. He chipped it only on one side to make it very sharp. Night had come. Natjimbui's wives slept on each side of him. He lay on his side near a small fire. The Kalpu man, when everyone was deep in sleep, sneaked up to Natjimbui's side and shoved his spear into his body at the base of the ribs. Natjimbui rose on his elbow but did not cry out. Gurnboko's father began shouting. Everyone started crying, and once more general confusion reigned throughout the camp. They cried, "Maringol maringol!" They thought that an enemy group had surrounded the camp. Someone called, "Djawarlt!" Natjimbui arose to his feet with the spear in his side and gathered up his own spear and spear-thrower. He walked back from the camp and its firelight until he was in the darkness. A Marango clansman called out his name, but he did not answer. He hooked up his spear and threw it at him. He missed. Another Marango came close to him and called his name. Natjimbui speared him in the abdomen. He then turned and walked away from the camp carrying his spear-thrower. His spears were depleted. He walked away and then came back to the fire. He pulled the handle of the spear out of his own body, but the stone head of the spear remained inside. He burned the handle of his spear-thrower [752] until it was red hot, and put it against his wound. This was to make it smaller and so that it would close up properly. He walked slowly away from the fire until he came to the mangrove jungle. He retraced his steps, leaving his tracks in the mud pointing toward the river. He came back from the river walking on the low limbs of the mangrove trees, attempting to make it impossible for his enemies to trace him. He came to a dry place in the rocks and walked along the stones and grass to a mangrove creek. He went into the water and then back to a dry place and then crossed another small creek.

Blood was dripping from his wound. He put grass inside the hole. He dropped his spear-thrower for he was growing weak. The tracks went a little farther and were lost. He had not been found at the time the author left the Murngin country. The searching party which had followed the trail decided he must have crawled on his hands and knees so as not to make tracks, and that he had successfully stopped the flow of blood.

A makarata was held, in which Natjimbui's relatives chased the Kalpu.

This is the last episode in the Murngin feud that I followed while in the north. When I left, plots were being formed to continue its eternal flow through the lives of the clans participating in the blood feud. The history of this feud shows clearly that although clan solidarity is of considerable importance, and at times it is even possible that two or more clans may ally themselves for a short period, the kinship system tends to break down these solidarities and make a feud almost the activity of one individual.

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
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This corporate unilineal descent group tends to be the smallest unit outside EGO's direct descent line, the composition of which I have mentioned above. This is the *babaru*. It is corporate—the body politic—because its male members will always act together, particularly in ritual observances: it may be distinguished from other linked *babaru*, forming the linguistic group, when such ceremonies are in progress. However closely linked these individual *babaru* may be, they are considered sectionally in one sense as separate entities. Each *babaru* is entitled to contribute its own sacred emblems (which may be of the same patterning as the other linked *babaru* within the linguistic group), and to modify and elaborate designs as it desires. Each *babaru*, among other things, will contribute sacred communal cycad nut "bread." 613

All male members of a *babaru* will engage in hunting together, but in this context they are the corporate group *plus*—and this plus will include their wives, so that they hunt as a local horde. But when they hunt for kangaroo, male members of the *babaru* hunt together and share as one: it is the same with fishing. They are the unit which will engage in feuds and in reprisals—brothers stand with brothers, fathers with sons, parallel cousins with parallel cousins, and so on. They are both the defensive and offensive unit. They can at times be allied with parallel *babaru* for this purpose; but when this is done payments are required, whereas within the unit no payment is considered necessary in cases of emergency. 613 621 [229] [628]

In the settling of disputes in what is known as the *mugurudu*, when the accused runs the gauntlet, his accusers throwing spears at him it is the *babaru* as one which throws the spears, on the one hand, and, on the other, the *babaru* of the accused which reinforces him on the other side of the ground. Allied *babaru* will stand close by, but it is the single *babaru* which acts. The head of the individual *babaru* is also the jural head; he makes decisions and maintains order within the several domestic circles constituting the *babaru* and its adherents. 613 628

The *babaru* too occupies usually a particular stretch of country, but this may be ill-defined, as the linguistic group the linked parallel *babaru* is said to be the landholding unit. It does not own the land, but holds it in custody for past generations of ancestors and future generations. Land can never be alienated, sold, or occupied by another group. (This is an aspect which needs greater consideration.) When we say that the linguistic group occupies a certain territory, we are saying mainly that it is traditionally associated with this. It may not always be present on it. The several linked *babaru* may separate and, at certain seasons with wives of their male members, wander as local hordes over the lands of other linguistic groups: but for their ceremonies, for their burials, and for a greater part of the year, they will be located in their relevant linguistic group, the boundaries of which are fairly clearly defined and are never questioned. 613 621 423

Considering these aspects, we feel justified in calling the unilineal descent group corporate. Moreover, this is the primary unit around which the Wulamba kinship system has been assembled. 601 613

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17

legal institutions found in the society—and this is a function of political organization." The more we consider the question of lineage structure, the less we are willing to classify the corporate descent group of Wulamba type as a lineage. There are, however, striking similarities. For example, writes Fortes (1953:26), "where the lineage is found as a corporate group all the members of a lineage are to outsiders jurally equal and represent the lineage when they exercise legal and political rights and duties in relation to society at large." Thus among the Wulamba the corporate descent group, the *baburn*, will be viewed, in toto, by different outsiders as a *maribula*, a *yadjiwalgurabula*, *wagubula*, *yandibula*, *gudarabula*, and so on, depending on what type of relative is found there. "My mother comes from there," or "My sister's son comes from there" thus those people are "my *yandibula*" or "my *wagubula*." All the people within that group will be conveniently classified as "those of my *yandibula*" and so on: all are equally classed with "my mother" or "sister's son," as the case may be, although terminological differences between certain individuals within the group are recognized. But all are held responsible for the actions of any individual within. There is thus a collective responsibility in blood vengeance and in feud, or in running the gauntlet in a *magurada* "peace ceremony." This is thus a function of the Wulamba descent group, as well as, apparently, of the lineage (p. 26).

However, an aspect which demarcates the Wulamba descent group from the lineage is the latter's presumed perpetuity in time. Fortes (p. 27) discusses its continuity, which means its perpetual structural existence—the perpetuation of defined rights, duties, offices, social tasks, and so on, vested in the lineage as a corporate unit. Among the Wulamba, as we have seen, genealogical memory is short. The greatest span of any descent line is five to six generations. But segmentation occurs at any point, so that a number of parallel descent groups are ranged to form a linguistic group, and genealogical connections between them may not always be accurately stipulated. Nevertheless, within the range of the parallel descent groups we find the perpetuation of defined rights which will be primarily of a ritual order, and relating to rights over patterns and emblems, dances, songs, myth sections, and so on; also rights to hunt a particular natural species; rights to make certain kinds of bags; and, sometimes, but rarely, specified tasks like canoe-making, or prerogatives concerning stone-ax and stone-blade quarries, deposits of ochre, and so on. This again raises some interesting questions, highly relevant to our concept of lineage and descent group alike.

It is true, too, as Fortes has mentioned (p. 29) that the descent group must be studied as a part of the total social system. He considers that the main methodological contribution to such studies has been the approach from the angle of political organization (p. 30). Whether this can be done for the Wulamba descent groups remains to be seen. Or again, that descent is fundamentally a jural concept (Radcliffe-Brown 1952): we see, says Fortes (1953:30), "its significance, as the connecting link between the external, that is political and legal, aspect of what we have called unilineal descent groups,

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OE17 Muragin OE17

and cut it up in the same manner as do the aborigines of today. The fishermen, the canoe and the pieces of turtle meat are now natural features at Jalbua.

In the upper right of the painting, Pl. 96B, *Minjapa* and *Wuluwil* are spearing the turtle. They are shown again seated on either side of a rock, a black circle. Below them are two casuarina trees, Pl. 91A,[98] which grow near the totemic place. The metamorphosed bodies of the two men, *Minjapa* and *Wuluwil*, now the turtle-rock[99] Ai-aika (Pl. 97A), are indicated at *a*, on the outer edge. There is a similar design immediately beneath the turtle. A semi-circular design near the tail of the turtle is the metamorphosed canoe, now a low red rock in the shallow water (Pl. 97C, on the left). The oval *b*, on the lower edge of the painting, is the carapace of the turtle (Pl. 97B). In the lower right are two pieces of flesh, *baiwu*, from the inside of the turtle's front flippers, and above is the club, *barlait*, with which the hunters killed the turtle. Above the carapace are two pieces of meat (more or less triangular figures) from the chest, called *tritiri*. The fat from the creature is indicated by a barred oval on the extreme upper left. The turtle-spear and spear-thrower are on the right-hand edge at *c*. Immediately to the left of them are two more pieces of meat from the inside of the front flipper.

The fishermen, the canoe, and the parts of the dismembered turtle have all been transformed into natural features on the sea-shore at Jalbua. The turtle-rock, Ai-aika (Pl. 97A) is the metamorphosed bodies of the turtle fishermen, *Minjapa* and *Wuluwil*. The canoe is a small low rock on the extreme left (Pl. 97C), the carapace (Pl. 97B) and parts of the dismembered turtle (Pl. 97D) large eroded boulders on the coast.

There is hardly a rock or a tree in this locality that is not linked, in one way or another, with either *Tjambuwal*, the thunder-man, *Muruma*, the fisherman, or *Minjapa* and *Wuluwil*, the turtle-fishers.

Tjuna-tjuna, Wururunga and the Bukalatji

Two brothers, *Tjuna-tjuna*[1] and *Wururunga*, were the first people to live on Dambalia (Bremer Island). They were paddling to the mainland in their bark canoe on one occasion when they noticed smoke among the trees and, on sneaking ashore, saw a *Bukalatji* man, *Djunmundia*, asleep by the fire. He was wearing, around his neck, a particularly large carrying-bag.

The brothers said to each other, "This is the man who killed our father last year. We now have our chance to pay him back."[2]

98. The same trees as those mentioned in the *Tjambuwal* myth.

99. The aborigines throw stones on the top of this rock in order to ensure success in catching turtles.

1. In the myth associated with the two carved heads, Pl. 139D, E, *Tjuna-tjuna* is called *Banaramin*.

2. Blood feuds are common in Arnhem Land and the cause of most of the killings. They can, however, be ended at a ceremonial peace-making fight, the *makaraka*. See Warner (1937), p. 174, also the myth of crocodile and stingray and the origin of the first *makaraka*, Pl. 122D.

[text continues on p. 305]

31 Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OE17 Muragia OE17

After performing the dance of the tiger snake, *dunbania*, they each painted the death mark of the snake on their faces[3] and cast their spears at the sleeping man. These passed through both his chest and carrying-bag, killing him instantly.

The two brothers, waiting until the wives of *Djunmundia* returned from fowl-gathering, captured them and, putting them aboard the canoe, paddled to an island north of Bremer Island. During the night, however, the women escaped, swam to the mainland, and told the *Bukalatji*,[4] relatives of the murdered *Djunmundia*, how their husband had been murdered. When the two brothers discovered their loss they returned to their camp on Bremer Island.

During the next few days the *Bukalatji* worked hard making a number of bark canoes. Waiting until there was no moon, they launched them and paddled to Dambalia. Leaving their canoes to the north of the island, the *Bukalatji* crept through the low scrub to surround and kill *Tjuna-tjuna* and *Wururunga*. But the brothers heard them and, in their flight, came by chance on the bark canoes, which they started to cut to pieces with the large steel knives which the Malays had given them. They had almost finished their work of destruction when the head man of the *Bukalatji* came up and begged them not to destroy his own canoe, so that he could take all of his people home. The brothers relented and allowed the *Bukalatji* to depart.

After some time the two brothers left Bremer Island and went to live near Cape Wilberforce, where they met and married two women from the nearby islands. The wives were out collecting oysters one day when the *Bukalatji* again attacked the brothers and this time succeeded in killing them. This so enraged the women that they attacked the *Bukalatji* with the knives belonging to their husbands and killed them all. *Tjuna-tjuna* and *Wururunga* were then transformed into goannas and their camps on Bremer Island into trees. Between those trees there is a path, which must be kept clean by the local aborigines.

On Pl. 98A the two brothers, at *a*, are paddling their canoe to the mainland. On the left, at *b*, they are holding their spear-throwers and avenging spears in their hands. The elder brother, *Tjuna-tjuna*, is on the right. At *c* is their enemy, *Djunmundia*, transfixed by the two avenging spears, one of which has passed through both his chest and his carrying-bag (cross-hatched oval). In the lower right panel *d*, black circles enclosing the goannas are totemic trees mentioned in the myth; the parallel lines, the path between them; and the curves, nearby sand-hills.

The Man, Balonarati, and the Paper-bark Trees of Matamataui

Between Trial and Caledon Bays is a river, Gainmaui. Near this river is the Matamataui swamp,[5] about half a mile across and filled with paper-bark trees.

3. The death mark, shown on the carved and painted head of *Banaramia*, Pl. 139D, *b*, is painted on the faces of all the men who take part in an avenging ceremony.
4. These are the mythical people who killed *Maruma*, the fisherman. See Pl. 96D.
5. This swamp is also mentioned in the myth of the three men and the bush-fire, Pl. 93B.

[Text continues on p. 307]

CARVED AND PAINTED FIGURES

The Mosquito Sacred Object

Plate 132D is a sacred object of the mosquito totem of Milingimbi. It belongs to the *dua narra* ceremonies. Collected by F. M. Setzler.

3. CARVED AND PAINTED HUMAN HEADS

The Two Brothers, Bauaramin and Wururunga

The two brothers, *Bauaramin*[78] and *Wururunga*, set out to kill their enemy, *Djunmundia*, who had previously murdered their father.[79]

Plate 139D, E, A, H illustrates the carved heads of the two brothers, *Bauaramin* and *Wururunga*.

The designs on the face of *Bauaramin*, Pl. 139D, E, and the white line down the nose, which represents the deadly tiger-snake, *dunbania*, are always painted on the face of the aborigines when they are setting out on an avenging expedition. They are known as the 'death-marks'.[80] The darker cross-hatched panels on the side of the head, Pl. 139D, indicate the base of the thunder-clouds, and the lighter coloured ones, their white tops.

The white dots on the face of *Wururunga*, Pl. 139H, are hail-stones, *milarik*, and the hole at the base of the nose, an attempt to represent a skull, for *Wururunga* has long since been dead.

On the side of the head of *Wururunga*, Pl. 139A, the darker cross-hatched panel represents falling rain, and the lighter coloured ones a hail-storm. The white dots on the side of the head also indicate hail-stones. When these hail-stones fall to the ground in *dua* territory they are sometimes transformed into white stones, *milarik*.[81] The dots on the neck are falling rain, and the white cap, the tops of cumulus clouds.

The Spirit Man, Duwuliana

This *dua Mokoi*, *Duwuliana*, lives in a forest at Arnhem Bay. As his only food is the honey of the wild bees, he carries only a honey basket.[82]

At the beginning of the dry season the basket is clean, having been well washed by the heavy storms of the wet season. As the dry season advances the basket becomes progressively darker in colour, due to the accumulated honey and dirt, for *Duwuliana* is a careless fellow who never washes his honey basket, knowing that the next wet season will save him the trouble. At the beginning of the dry season the honey in the hives in the trees is a golden-yellow in colour, but it gradually darkens and becomes less pleasant to eat as the season advances. The aborigines blame *Duwuliana* for this change, claiming that if he were more cleanly and washed his basket regularly they would always have clear golden honey.

78. In the myth of the bark painting, Pl. 98A, *Bauaramin* is called *Tjuna-tjuna*.
79. See myth of *Tjuna-tjuna* and *Wururunga*, p. 303.
80. See myth, p. 305.
81. See the white stones, *milarik*, at the totem place of the thunder-man at Jalluu, Pl. 91F.
82. A tightly woven basket which will hold honey.

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
O117 Murngin O117

Character, Arts and Crafts

Personal Character.

152 In personal character these aborigines are light-hearted and
522 happy, with a great fondness for practical joking. Anything which places another in a position of discomfiture is hugely enjoyed. They are quick and rather violent tempered, but on the whole their temper is shortlived.

152 A comparatively trifling offence will quickly result in a general
579 disturbance, in which both sexes engage, and during which weapons are brandished and an amazing amount of mutual abuse is indulged in, but usually little serious damage is done, and, having talked themselves out, life soon returns to its normal course.

157 As might be expected, there are some few individuals of a more sullen and anti-social type who become notorious as trouble-makers, and who constitute a difficult problem for their own people. The outstanding weakness of the aborigine's character is his want of a sense of personal responsibility. Rarely does a man act on his own initiative or assume and maintain an individual attitude in regard to any matter.

[157] This is undoubtedly accounted for by the fact that in the
[182] aboriginal community the unit is not the individual, but the
614 tribal horde. The tribe or group stands or falls together. Every
672 member of it shares in the honour or disgrace of any one of its number. An offence by one member is regarded by another tribe or division as an offence by the whole of the offender's division. All are held as being equally guilty.

614 In such serious offences as occasion the shedding of blood,
●628 the members of the injured tribe or division make no special
672 attempt to avenge themselves upon the individual who has actually committed the offence, but are as well satisfied if they succeed in punishing any member of the party to which he belongs. Though the tribe as a whole may strongly disapprove of the action of one of their number, by which action hostility has been created between them and another tribe, they, knowing they are all involved, must nevertheless stand behind this particular individual.

182 In this way is the individual relieved of the responsibility of
157 his own actions, and does not personally realise their results
614
[672] EITHER FOR GOOD OR ILL.

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
O117 Murngin O117

Warfare and Physique

Warfare

[619] 721 On account of the want of cohesion between the various tribal hordes, each of which maintains to a large extent a separate and independent existence, various causes, such as the competition for women, give rise to much hostility, and warfare is a pronounced feature of the life of this aboriginal community. Though an organised clash of arms is of infrequent occurrence, many are killed under varied circumstances as a result of this tribal hostility. 628 Numerous killings also result from family vendettas, which are carried on through many generations. In the pursuance of these vendettas the usual practice is to take a man by stealth, while he is asleep or when separated from his companions.

A ceremony known as "Makkarata" is a very important and valuable means of healing breaches of the peace. In this ceremony two groups of men, composed of the offending and the offended tribes or divisions respectively, take up their positions some 150 yards apart on a piece of open ground. With each of these groups will be a number of neutral men, who are not concerned in the dispute in question, whose duty it is to see that no unfair advantage is taken by either party.

The chief offender, who is also accompanied by neutrals, then runs backwards and forwards across the centre of the ground, while each man of the offended party throws one or more spears at him. If this man succeeds in avoiding the spears thrown, he then, in a descriptive dance, approaches the offended party, and taking his stand in front of their leader thrusts out his leg, into which a spear is promptly plunged. In this way the offence is wiped out, and peace is restored between these previously hostile parties. I have known feuds of many years' standing to be completely healed by this ceremony.

Physique

142 These coastal tribes of East Arnhem Land are physically of a fine type, virile, pugnacious, and manly. Though generally somewhat slighter in build, the average height of both sexes is approximately the same as that of our own race. Because of their nomadic life, their continual walking, running and dancing, most

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
O117 Murngin O117

753 fire, and, as the smoke ascended, he asked it to carry this coughing
754 sickness to these people.

754 In this aboriginal community are men known as Gulung, or
756 "Marrngit," who exercise magic in a curative or preventive way. Their chief function is to discover and combat the sinister purposes of the Ragalk, or of evil spirits. Neither the Ragalk nor the Marrngit occupy a position apart from the ordinary life of the people, nor do they exercise any special functions in the ceremonial life of the tribe.

628 Magic is also believed to operate through an article known
765 as "Maiyabala." When a man dies or is killed, a scrap of one of
778 his bones, or a piece of one of his weapons or utensils, is given by one of his near relatives to each of his friends. This article is known as a "Maiyabala," and carries with it this important significance. Every man accepting the "Maiyabala" places himself under the obligation of doing his best to avenge the death of the deceased. I have known men who have allowed themselves to be persuaded into accepting the "Maiyabala," to be later deeply troubled when they have considered the probable consequences of their action. There is no way of escaping the obligation, and these men have thus made themselves party to a serious quarrel which probably does not concern them.

[677] When a man, in fulfilment of this obligation, kills another, he
765 is usually relieved from personal responsibility in the matter, the
778 magical property of the "Maiyabala," by directing the man's spear and giving strength to his throw, being regarded as the actual cause of the killing. The Maiyabala is also worn as a charm, and is believed to assist the wearer in fighting or in the pursuit of game, the idea being that the spirit of the dead man reinforces and assists that of the wearer of this relic.

775 Closely allied to the above are some of the beliefs concerning the "Mali," or lesser spirits, of men who have been killed. When a man has killed another it is believed that the "Mali" of the slain seeks to enter the person of the slayer, the idea here being that, by overcoming the man's body, the victor has also overcome his spirit, which now seeks to serve its new master. Numbers of men of my acquaintance claim to have passed through this experience.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

rare in this north-east region[27] seems hard to believe when we consider the extent of Asiatic, Indonesian and European contact, and the sexual intimacy of the Aboriginal women with members of all these groups. Physically, these people remain more or less intact,[28] and increasing sterility has not followed contact as it has at Goulburn Island in western Arnhem Land. But there is a danger today, with the growing association these natives have with the Goulburn Island people, with the "crew-boys" on Mission luggers, and with native and European men and women in Darwin, that venereal disease will be introduced and disseminated. Aboriginal attitudes toward medical attention often preclude an early treatment of such cases, and the disease is allowed to gain much ground before it can be controlled and eradicated.

A word may be said of depopulation in this region. The reasons for this are not the same as at Goulburn Island, or on the cattle stations in the central north-western area of the Northern Territory,[29] but may perhaps be found in the warlike habits of the eastern Arnhem Landers.[30] Constant feuding over a long period is said to have reduced especially the male population, and brought about the extinction or amalgamation of many clans. This warring propensity led to a surplus of women, and had a direct bearing on sexual behaviour. For example, large polygynous families were formed; and these are conventional even today. It was perhaps because of this that the Aborigines were more ready to allow the Macassans and Malays access to their womenfolk: possibly there would have been far more dissension between these people and the Indonesian traders had their social structure been primarily monogamous.

[pp. 26-176 not processed]

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

628

Plate 15a: A ritualized "peace-making" ceremony held at Yirrkalla.

Plate 15b: A canoe from "Badu," washed up at Yirrkalla.

501

[p. 25(J)]

602 614 616 they stand in a particular relationship, and for *yiritja* to reciprocate for *dua*. The foregoing account applies also to the organisation of most communal enterprises such as [226] large-scale fishing drives, where the technique is related to local conditions, and therefore has a localised background. In such cases the practice is regarded as traditional, as a part of the pattern or heritage which has been passed to the clan by its founders, the totemic ancestor or ancestors, and which is therefore the special right or privilege of its mem- [628] bers. Such traditional rights are invariably recognised and respected by other clans and are rigidly enforced, so that any violation may lead to punitive measures and even result in an inter-clan feud. And since the procedure is well understood by all participants, differences or disputes rarely, if ever, arise, and control or authority is not apparent. Most of these enterprises run so smoothly that only those who know the people and understand the social organisation would be aware of the identity of the man in authority.

224 226 602 At the conclusion of a hunting "drive" or grass burning operation, or after the completion of a communal fishing expedition, the game or fish is divided equally among those who took part. The group will then often sit down and cook or partially cook the food before taking it back to camp, when it is again sub-divided by each of the people according to his or her own family or kinship obligations.

224 [136] While the burning of the grass yields an appreciable amount of animal food, of which the most important are kangaroos and wallabies among larger quarry, and such small game as bandicoots, opossums, "goanna" or Monitor lizards (*Varanus*), and snakes—it also has the effect of destroying the tops of food plants, which can then no longer be detected by the women. Burning must, therefore, be

which goes on. But while these obligations impose a heavy burden, especially upon a young man who must attend a long series of ceremonies with a vista of payments to be met, the ceremonies in turn confer some benefit upon him, although this may be indirect. They carry increased social status and prestige which in turn bring gradual liberation from some of the irksome tabus which influence almost every act of a young man.

Although on these occasions the immediate burden of gathering vegetable food falls on his female relatives, especially upon his mother and sisters, this does not relieve the initiate of his own personal obligations, but rather intensifies them. He must now redouble his efforts in hunting to enable him in turn to supply his women relations with fish, kangaroo, "sugar bag" or wild honey, in order to retain their goodwill. A man's success as a hunter depends not only on his ability to stalk and his skill with the spear but also on his capacity to make, and to maintain in serviceable condition, his hunting weapons, his fishing lines and nets and sometimes also a canoe. So initiation, especially initiation into the jealously-guarded clan totems (*märdai'in*) of the small groups which characterise the social organisation of North-eastern Arnhem Land, with their intense solidarity and quick resentment,[10] sets up a long train of social obligations—each with a definite economic import—each requiring gift and counter gift, and furnishing the motive for work, the urge for production both of food and *gerri*.

[10] Just as generous presentations of *gerri* (material wealth) and *ŋätu* (food) promote goodwill, so tardiness in the discharge of these obligations may lead to avenging expeditions and interclan feuds. A man who is unpopular, or who is notorious for his carelessness in these matters is more likely to be named as the victim when a scapegoat is sought to avenge a death or wrong.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

5.

THE CEREMONIAL EXCHANGE CYCLE IN ARNHEM LAND

When a newcomer in Arnhem Land settles down among the people, he quickly becomes familiar with the material culture and technology and is struck by the localised and restricted nature of the distribution of certain elements and minor traits and even of technological materials, and by the extreme conservatism of the people.

In the case of certain elements—in particular, the *mintji*, the magnificent patterns in polychrome, the totemic designs which are the hereditary property, the "copyright", of a group called by these people, *barpuro*, (a clan or an aggregation of clans, linked by the possession of common totemic ancestors)—this is understandable. Anything, whether social or material, which touches the solidarity of these closely-integrated groups, is jealously guarded, and its infringement bitterly resented and quickly avenged.[31] So that prudence, as well as conservatism, plays a part in restricting

[31] Sometimes this may be averted by expiatory or conciliatory payments of food or *gerri* to appease the injured or offended sentiments of the individual or group, which serve to restore a state of *euphoria* or ritual goodwill. But these presentations are invariably carried out in a ritual or ceremonial manner which gives them the stamp of formal approval of the society acting as a group and so lifts them above the level of mere personal or private feuds.

184 424 614 the free use of certain elements, because they are regarded as the special prerogative of one clan or group of clans. This applies most strongly to matters which relate to clan totemism, but in material culture it may extend even to such [226] things as the technique of fish capture, the right to practise some specialised method of fishing, such as the *gorl*,[82] which have been developed in adaptation to peculiar local conditions and which are regarded as the exclusive property of the members of one clan or group of clans, who alone have the traditional right, not merely to fish in one territory, but even the exclusive right to practise the technique itself. In the case of the *gorl*, which is one of the most specialised methods of fish capture found anywhere in the world, this can easily be explained, for the technique is used only in one area on the Glyde River where it is localised in the territory of one or possibly of two, clans, and is therefore regarded as under protection of the *wänärr*, the ancestors of the clan or clans concerned.

184 424 [688] [685] [628] The restriction of the use of such traits and specialised techniques as the *gorl*, which are jealously guarded, and of which any infringement is bitterly resented and visited by vengeance, often leading to fighting and interclan feud, rests upon the belief that the heritage which its members have received from the *wänärr*, the ancestors of the clan, has been infringed, and that its solidarity has suffered damage thereby, rather than from economic motives such as the desire to monopolise food supplies, raw materials, or *gèrri*, as with civilised man.

181 184 Even apart from these matters which touch on the solidarity of groups and which therefore restrict the distribution of a trait or process, the people are extremely

[113] [82] See Donald F. Thomson, *A New Type of Fish Trap from Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, Man, 1938, No. 216.

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ordinary men, in about the same proportion as we do. However, no matter how much we like natives and their culture, there is always a tendency to assume an ethnic superiority and to look upon a "primitive" man as "just like a child." This assumed mental superiority is part of our thinking and difficult to dislodge.

A "council" of the important old men had gathered under a large tamarind tree on the border of the totem grounds (page 31). Mahkarolla, as one of the older and more important men of the Murngin, had a place in the circle. [I was also present.] The members of this council were discussing the perplexities of the great war in which their various clans were involved. A few months before there had been complete quiet. In the whole of northern Arnhem Land there had been peace. All the old blood feuds were quiet and inactive. The great ceremony to celebrate the recognition of Yurlunggur, the python god, had started. Leaders from the upper reaches of the Roper River had come down to the coastal plains of the Arafura Sea for this great fertility rite.

One night two young men, against the wishes of their elders, killed a boy and wounded another who belonged to clans that had been their traditional enemies. In the early morning the bush people gathered their belongings and hurried back to their own country. The younger men of all the clans of the Murngin and the other tribes made new spears and tested their spear-throwers in preparation for trouble. War started. The ceremonies ceased. Many battles were fought and many people were killed (pages 172-174).

The ceremony which had been interrupted was a fertility rite. Without this celebration to help nature perform her many functions, the animals would not multiply, the grass would not grow, and the seasons of the year would lose their symmetry. The absolute necessity for the celebration of this ritual was felt by all the men who had accepted the responsibilities of Murngin society.

The council had met, therefore, to find ways of stopping the war and of bringing peace to all the clans of the black world as they knew it. The war must be stopped if life were to continue.

The causes of the war were considered in the effort to find a solution which would bring peace to the people. The reasons for the failure of the peace-making ceremonies were considered. Blame was attached to various individuals. The old men criticized especially the hot-headedness of their youths, with slightly more emotion expressed when they spoke of the misdeeds of their enemies' young men.

After several hours of talk consensus was reached. It was felt that the warlike peoples of the bush were really responsible for the trouble. It was

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623 clearly seen that those not represented at the conference were the real insti-
●628 gators of the war and that their actions were without tribal sanction.

[202] One old man then suggested sending a messenger with a message stick to the bushmen, who were not represented, to tell them that there would be a great makarata or peace-making ceremony (pages 174-176). Someone replied that this was foolishness for makaratas had been tried and they had failed because the enemies violated the rules. Instead of bringing peace the makaratas had only brought more trouble and greater conflict. Discussion of this point finally brought victory to the one who opposed the makaratas because the antagonism of the coastal people against the inland clans was still very strong and they wanted vengeance as well as peace.

What, then, could be done to stop the fighting? The situation was desperate; drastic efforts must be made. One of the older men said, "Let us stop all war. This killing of our young men is no good. It is better that we have ceremonies all the time and never have war. Let us have a gaingar."

Everyone agreed he was right. The speaker continued, "We will have a spear fight to end all spear fights."

A gaingar is the most deadly form of Murngin warfare. Later I learned that 17 men had been killed in one gaingar. In proportion to the population this meant a higher mortality rate than in all of the battles of World War I. This old man was proposing that today's young men be sacrificed so that the young men of tomorrow could be saved.

I was asked what I thought of the idea. I did not respond for it was too much. I sat there, among a council of the wisest men of a Stone Age culture. In one sense several millenniums separated their civilization from mine. Yet I had been a soldier in a war in which our leaders and those of our allies had said, "This is a war to end all wars," and had sent millions of young men to die with this rallying cry.

The discussion continued. Most of the group were enthusiastically in favor of the gaingar. The minority, Mahkarolla among them, grudgingly agreed.

When the meeting disbanded Mahkarolla and I walked back to my camp. "When I was a boy I saw a spear fight to end all spear fights," he said. "Many men were killed. It was no good. We must not have it. My people did not stop fighting. As you see, we are fighting today just as we did before. Spear fights do not end spear fights."

159 One day Mahkarolla and I started on an expedition with two canoeloads
502 of Murngin men, I to map clan territories, he to visit the sacred pools where
E121 his totems lived. As we sailed in the dugout around the rocky cliffs of
184 Point Napier, across the channel from the English Company Islands, we
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to be named as a scapegoat by the *marngitmirri* of a neighbouring group when one of its members has died, and to be killed by an avenger who has been presented with a spear, to which is attached a bone, usually a metacarpal bone, taken from the finger of the deceased. One or more of these metacarpal bones are removed after the body has been disinterred. They are cleaned and decorated with the orange-red feathers of the red-collared lorikeet (*Trichoglossus rubritorques*), *lindiritj*. One of these *maidjaballa*, as they are called, is attached by a short string to the head of the spear and becomes an avenger's pennant. When a man is presented with a spear to which the *maidjaballa* is attached in this way, he is charged with the responsibility of killing the scapegoat. This is usually done by catching the victim off guard and spearing him. Sometimes this man may defer the action for a long enough time for the injured sentiments of the group to be appeased, when a potential blood feud may be averted by an expiatory payment or by a formal ordeal by spear.

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In the practice of his cult the *kalka* is believed by the people of the east to waylay his victim in the bush when he is hunting or to invite him to go on a kangaroo hunt. Sometimes the *kalka* may induce his victim to accompany him by claiming to have already killed and cached a kangaroo—which was too heavy for him to carry back to camp alone.

Once he has succeeded in getting the victim away from his friends, the *kalka* has little difficulty in catching him off guard and overcoming him. Generally he will have made a rendezvous with other *kalka* in the bush. These men overpower their victim by knocking him down, then they open his mouth and pull down his lower lip to expose the alveolar border into which they insert the *kandjurma*—made from a long thin piece of ironwood called *maipin*, or from the long bones of a flying fox or the fibula of a kangaroo, sharpened to a fine point. Informants overlooked the fact that in this approach the *kandjurma* would strike the bone of the mandible or lower jaw. To the distal end of this *kandjurma* is attached a rope of human hair which is placed in a shallow trough of tea-tree bark called *tannia* in which the blood drained from the heart is said to be collected. The *kalka*, now aided by his confederates, has rendered his victim unconscious or comatose. As the *kandjurma* is inserted into the heart, which is approached by way of the dorsal aorta, the victim is said to emit a series of deep husky rasping intakes of breath. Each time this occurs the *kalka* pauses, but as soon as it ceases he thrusts the long, sharply pointed *kandjurma* a little farther down the great vessel towards the heart (*tortork*).[4]

The *kandjurma* is guided and shielded by the left hand of the *kalka* as he uses his right hand to thrust the point down to reach the heart.

Meanwhile one of the *kalka* places the *tannia* close to the victim. He now holds the man's head while the blood runs into it; the *kalka* then grasps his victim around the waist and squeezes his body so that all the blood is drained from it, after which he removes the *tannia* and hides it.

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The blood collected is made into small parcels wrapped in paper bark and either used in ritual cannibalism or rubbed

[p.100(B)]

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134 humus are swept into the swamps or out to sea. The residue
132 from this fierce erosion is the typical clay, gravel, and stone of Arnhem Land. Nevertheless, with the first cloudbursts, the harassed country makes an astounding recovery. In an
137 incredibly short time a thick growth of high coarse grass
136 covers the rocky hills and sandy valleys, yams spring to life on gravel slopes, and animal and bird life is rejuvenated; red kangaroos, agile wallabies, opossums, mice, snakes, goannas, emus, jungle fowls, ducks, geese, spoonbills, herons, brolgas, and many more in kind grow fat and lazy from the
132 lavish hand of nature. But the vicious circle is not to be avoided. Winds swing back to the south-east and the nightmare of poverty again creeps over the land.

123 Exploring in the north-east brought us into contact with most of the scattered hordes so frequently referred to as the 'Killers of Arnhem Land'. In early September we were in the English Company's Islands, with the crew on the look-out for Yulengor; and when they saw a thin column of smoke on a beach, conjecture was rife as to who was in the camp. A dozen men and boys paddled out in their big dug-out canoes and came aboard somewhat diffidently. However, they were soon squatting round the hatch ex-
[276] changing news with the crew, all the time passing the one and only bush pipe backwards and forwards and drawing deeply the first tobacco smoke they had tasted for months. Most of them were strong and well developed, with bushy hair, but not too clean. As a concession to the white man
[291] they had donned strips of bark on string waistbands. They were reserved, but interested in all we did, and gladly accepted a couple of tomahawks, wire for fish-spears, and fish-hooks.

628 After the visitors had cast-off in their canoes, a crew-boy
684 mentioned that our visitors had just returned from killing a
682 man in revenge for the death of another in the hills behind our anchorage. It was a long story of intrigue and murder,

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and on the shore after dark, the horde told me about it in their own graphic fashion. Months previously, Burramai had legally married a certain woman. But she had a grown-up daughter and the trouble started when he also took this 'step-daughter' into his camp, knowing full well that she was not of his marriage-division and that tribally she was regarded as being as much his daughter as one of his own flesh and blood.

It was not long before this scandal of incest was known to all the hordes, and Murrkundi, a close relative of the women, came down through the islands looking for Burramai, and eventually found him by his fire near Melville Bay. Murrkundi wasted no time in taking up the argument: 'How many wives do you want? Isn't it enough that you have a legal wife from your own marriage-division? Or do you want women from other men's divisions as well?' Burramai was adamant: 'Yes, I want all the women I can get. All your talk about tabus and legal marriage is rubbish. I have had my step-daughter for many moons and no harm has come to me—I'm not dead yet.'

Murrkundi seemed to give way before this blasphemous outburst, and merely asked to be taken to see the women who were also his relatives; for in Arnhem Land, nomads are tribally related over distances of several hundred miles. When they had gone some distance Murrkundi feigned thirst, so his guide took him to a pool in a mountain stream, but he held back so that Burramai might drink first. Kneeling down to drink, Burramai saw in the clear water the reflection of Murrkundi fitting a spear to his spear-thrower with the obvious intention of killing him, so without drinking he rose quickly and wiped his lips, and said: 'That is good water. It has made me strong again. You have a drink now.'

Murrkundi drank in safety, for Burramai remembered that the water carried reflections and refrained from spearing the man. But once they were out of the stream, he told

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628 684 687 Murrkundi to lead the way because he wished to go into the bushes for a few moments. Unsuspectingly Murrkundi fell into the trap, and as he passed by, Burramai drove a spear through his arm and another into his back. Mortally wounded, Murrkundi fell to the ground and asked: 'What is all this about? Why have you speared me?'

'You know well enough. This is of your own making. When I was drinking I saw your reflection in the water as you fitted your spear to kill me.'

'If you think I intended to spear you, you are wrong. I never pointed the spear at you, I merely hooked it to my spear-thrower and pointed it away into the bush.'

'Well, I'm not like you and I don't understand your actions. If I see anyone pointing a spear at me I kill him.'

And with that Burramai turned on his heel and walked off, thinking to himself: 'He's not dead yet, but by midday the sun will be hot and he will die.'

Months later Murrkundi's friends found his skeleton and [964] performed the customary ghost-laying ceremonies prior to packing the bones in bark and sending them to his horde on Elcho Island.

Burramai skilfully evaded several plots to kill him for the death of Murrkundi, until eventually a big inter-tribal gathering was held in Arnhem Bay, and was preceded by [928] the usual peace-making ceremony in which old differences are settled. Burramai was present and went through his trial-by-ordeal and made peace with the relatives of the dead Murrkundi. Normally the matter should have ended there, but an old man went to Burramai as he sat in peace with his erstwhile enemies and abruptly reopened the dispute: 'Why did you kill Murrkundi? He didn't steal your wife or abuse your totem. Why did you spear him like a dog?' Old passions were revived. One unrestrained youth said: 'Let us finish him now.' Burramai, who was exhausted from the all-day trial-by-ordeal, then made the fatal error of

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running away, and two youths chased him into the jungle. One of them threw a spear which cut off his ear, and a second went through him. The avengers shouted to the horde, and one by one the men plunged their spears into the body and left it there, exposed and deliberately mutilated.

It was after midnight when the men finished this story of stark Stone Age justice, and I left them on the beach to return to the lugger to switch on a portable radio for an assurance that this was actually the twentieth century.

The rest of the trip was boisterous, with head winds and heavy seas, till we entered Port Bradshaw and beached the boat for repairs. Long ago, Macassar traders fished here for trepang, and East Indian tamarind trees fringing the shoreline marked their camps. I came across a curious formation of stones, and could make nothing of it till months later I read in Matthew Flinders's diary that in 1803 he saw similar formations in Blue Mud Bay. He could not solve the riddle till he met the Macassars in the English Company's Islands, where Pobasso, their chief, told him that the Malays had made the stone fireplaces to boil and cure their bêche-de-mer.

Bêche-de-mer is known locally by its Macassar name of trepang. Scientifically it is termed *Echinodermata* or 'Spiny-skinned'; seven hundred species are known to exist, and the few varieties in Australia range from nine to eighteen inches in length. They are rough skinned and look like lumps of rubber or bread rolls, with ridged bands extending around the entire length. Trepanging is the oldest industry in Australia, for it seems to have been at its height soon after Captain Cook landed at Botany Bay. Malay traders gathered it for the Chinese market. It must be cured for export, and the process is much the same as that used by the Malays. It is gutted, boiled in a strong solution of mangrove bark and sea-water, smoked over a slow fire, dried in the sun, and bagged. Chinese regard it as a delicacy and

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562 578 groups by their fire, cooking fish and waiting for their wives and mothers to come with food and firewood. For an hour or more Damilipi, the oldest of Yakangaiya's wives, partially blind, stark naked, and switching flies with a bunch of twigs, strode up and down haranguing and insulting her men, accusing them of cowardice and laziness in not raiding their [628] hereditary enemies and continuing a feud which was dying by mutual consent. Damilipi's campaign was continued for two days, and as other women joined her the horde was roused to the point of organizing a killing party. Weeks later the men attacked, and in the reprisals two of Damilipi's sons and a daughter-in-law were killed.

583 [582] Wives may be acquired by bestowal, by the passing on of widows, or by theft or capture. Bestowal is the most frequent method, and tribal law provides that a woman must marry her father's sister's son or, should this be impracticable, an equally well-defined alternate husband is provided. Relationships are ageless, and if there are no women in the right marriage-relationship a man not infrequently remains a bachelor till a woman is captured or an elderly widow is available.

Peculiarities result from the practice of bestowal, in that a man does not acquire a mother-in-law by marrying her daughter, but conversely he marries a daughter because her mother has always been his mother-in-law. Several brothers may have the same mother-in-law, who may not have enough daughters for them all, and this gives rise to the practice of promising even an unborn wife to a prospective husband. 'Inipi' is a rite whereby an acceptable son-in-law takes the sebum from his cheek by the side of his nose and anoints the abdomen of his mother-in-law, sometimes while she is still in her infancy, and thereafter all her children come under the special care of the son-in-law, who makes presents to her sons and marries her daughters. By the Inipi rite, one of several brothers may have prior claims and obtain several

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must memorize the design. Blank spaces on maraian are due to the artist's loss of memory, and they freely admit that they have forgotten some parts of the design.

As well as having a link with the distant Woolen River, the Reratjingo had its own totem centre near Port Bradshaw, and were co-guardians with the Kalpu. But this did not guarantee unity, for the question of guardianship led to quarrels in which several were killed and the Reratjingo withdrawing to Melville Bay forty miles away. But the Kalpu victory was short lived, for in driving off the Reratjingo they so weakened the home-front, that their hereditary enemies, the Juppu of Blue Mud Bay, descended on them with such vindictiveness that the remnant fled to the English Company's Islands eighty miles away, and they have been on the defensive ever since.

Prolonged friendships between hordes does not prevent the sudden cessation of diplomatic relations, and an occasional killing. The Gerrkee from Cape Shield had fraternized, hunted, and camped for years with the Juppa. Though they were of opposite moieties, they exchanged secret law, held totemic dances, and seemed inseparable. Yet one night when I was visiting their camp I saw that they were at loggerheads, and soon afterwards they brandished their spears, attacked each other, yelling threats and obscenities. It all started at the end of a successful day's hunting, when everyone had more than enough to eat and a Juppa woman hit her Gerrkee husband with a digging-stick after a trivial disagreement. He retaliated by knocking her down and bumping her head on the ground. Her father heard her screams, and remonstrated with his son-in-law, who then called on his brothers for assistance. In a flash, both clans were in a fracas. Women used their digging-sticks, or lengths of wood from the camp-fires, and darted in amongst the men to deal their blows. Men slashed with yard-long flat spear-throwers. After an hour of bedlam,

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628 [578] of dust and of yelping dingoes, the noise subsided; the families wandered back to their camps, and by morning the disturbance seemed to have been forgotten.

But not all disturbances end so amicably, for with a killing a blood-feud is established, and these sometimes go on for years. One day a nomad brought word to me of tribal hostilities in the hills behind Caledon Bay, and hastily loading camping-gear, medical equipment, and stores on the motor launch, I set out with two boys to make a quick trip down the Gulf coast. We saw smoke on a beach near Caledon Bay, and on the shore we found the Yulengor resting after their flight, nursing their wounds and cooking a turtle.

Two days previously the women, children, and a few old men had been left in a selected camp when the men went off on one of their kangaroo hunts. At the end of the day the hunters were weary, and camped for the night. Before dawn one of the frequent raiding or 'meringor' parties crept up on the women's camp and hurled spears into the sleeping groups. Casualties were light, but a passing spear fatally slashed an infant's wrist and killed the mother; several old men and children were also wounded. Two women ran to inform the men, who hastily collected the scattered members of the camp, and before morning the whole party was on its way to Caledon Bay.

I dressed their wounds and gave several injections for yaws, but the camp was restless. Through the night a dozen false alarms were given, and early the following morning the men set off in their canoes with women and children trailing along the beaches. We left shortly afterwards and passed some of the canoes and saw the paddlers waving and pointing to the first catch of the day, a large turtle which they had harpooned. Until we passed out of sight in the early afternoon a long wall of smoke rose from the track behind [224] the beaches where women and children were travelling and

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firing long grass to drive out edible snakes, rats, and goannas. Others searched the beaches for concealed turtle nests, which often yield from five to ten dozen eggs.

Raids are common, and as the men are killed the vendetta passes from one generation to another. Entire hordes have been exterminated, and today there are several remnants in which a couple of women or old men are all that remain from clans once large. Usually the feuds continue till the parties find it desirable to negotiate for peace to allow some ceremony to be held. Big ceremonies involving several hordes are invariably preceded by these peacemaking 'Makkarratas', for before they can sing and dance together they must adjust their differences.

For the 'makkarrata', the opposing clans take up positions about two hundred yards apart and face each other. Members of the offending horde run again and again toward the avengers, who throw spears at them. If the offence is a serious one, the killer may be killed; but the culprit uses his skill to side-step the spears, and it is seldom that these trials-by-ordeal prove fatal. Having agreed to establish peace, the avengers throw their spears as a gesture of disapproval, often with no intent to harm.

Once the avengers have thrown their spears and exhibited their indignation, a neutral party conducts the culprit to them. He reverses his spears and hands them over, turns his back and presents a thigh for a spear to be plunged into it. By the drawing of blood the crime is expiated and tension is released. Avengers and neutrals crowd round the culprit, congratulating him in the friendliest manner and ridiculing the idea of bad blood ever existing between them. Usually they make a combined camp and spend the night in singing and dancing.

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of the hordes sit apprehensively under shady trees whilst the men paint intricate totemic designs on the initiates. More often than not several hordes meet for the occasion, and all the boys between eight and ten years of age are prepared by relatives. Armlets, dilly-bags and trinkets are hung around their necks for decorative purposes, and sometimes they carry a knife or steel tomahawk. When their moment arrives, the boys are brought to the ceremonial ground, and the men dance and sing with increasing emotion, till at last they bunch together and with kindly reluctant movements force each boy into the arms of a crouching man who supports and holds him. Women relatives close in and dance around the tightly packed circle and wail in rising agitation, others gash their heads, and girl playmates of the initiates cry amongst the trees and cut their breasts with sharp shells. An invitation is often extended to a visiting Yulengor to perform the actual operation, which is frequently prolonged by the use of a stone knife or spearhead. The loud purposeful calls of the men seldom drown the cries of the victim. It is then that a wave of emotion sweeps over the entire camp.

When a nomad is sick the relatives will crouch tightly around him, and their excessively mournful sympathy is conducive to moans and vapours from the patient. Eye-rolling and groans will accompany even simple sprains and abdominal pains and inspire sympathetic cries and wails. At the approach of death, the next of kin draw near pathetically brushing flies from the patient, attempting to sustain warmth with sheets of paper-bark, but unwittingly stifling him in a turgid atmosphere. There are wails and shrieks if continuous movement is not seen from some part of the body. Commotion at death is indescribable; women deliberately hurl themselves on the ground with loud cries, and they wail loudly and tremulously as they stab their heads with sharp stones and shells.

Egyptians preserved mummified bodies in pyramids,

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ABORIGINAL TEMPERAMENT

Men of the Reratjingo horde one day met two Kalpu youths with feigned friendliness, for both hordes shared the same totem and had other interests in common. But, unbeknown to the Kalpu youths, a Reratjingo man had recently died and his death had been attributed to Kalpu magic. Both parties sat on the beach, and most of the Reratjingo men drew away, with studied insouciance, ostensibly to hunt, leaving two of their number to entertain the Kalpu youths. A plan for revenge was then hatched by the Reratjingo, and as they came back, they signalled to their two accomplices to spear the Kalpu men. As they drove in their spears the others rushed in and completed the massacre. Mortally wounded, the Kalpu victims asked and were told why they had been attacked. They protested that they knew nothing of the death-by-magic, and bore no ill-will toward the dead man or his horde; whereupon the killers to a man expressed genuine sorrow and regret for the attack. They commiserated to such an extent that their victims implored them to end their misery, and they obligingly did so.

In the early days at Yirrkala some boys and their dogs went to fish at Melville Bay, twelve miles away, and in the evening when the dogs returned without the boys, a prolonged wailing and commotion broke out in the camp and fighting spears were produced and brandished. I asked what it was all about, and was told that because the dogs had come back alone it was surmised that the boys had been ambushed and speared. Fighting men were noisily preparing to go after the hypothetical enemy until I suggested that the dogs could have come back for something to eat, and that possibly the boys had camped at the bay. The men agreed to wait until morning, and then the boys came home! It is hard to say what would have happened if they had gone out at night searching for enemies, but at least this much is certain—they would have satiated their emotions by

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spearing any wandering nomad they may have chanced upon.

Camp quarrels are fiery and frequent, and everyone joins in on the slightest provocation. An imaginary slight, perhaps a small irregularity in food distribution, or the frequently organized female attempts to annoy a bachelor by accusing him of making advances to married women, are enough to arouse resentment and inflame the emotions. Physical violence is usually preceded by a noisy battle of wit and the exchange of abuse. Over forty commonly used abusive epithets range from ingenious and witty references to male and female genital abnormalities to the calling into question of the integrity of parents, as well as that of future generations. It is also common to threaten to leave a man's bones to rot in the grave instead of removing them for decent burial in a burying post; the formal curse is: 'May your bones rot before they can be lifted for interment.'

Every possible, impossible, and imaginary physical irregularity, ranging from the ludicrous to the obscene, is applied to the genital organs of both sexes, and all the references are shouted in the open camp. A favourite obscene remark is that an opponent's eyes, ears, and mouth are filled with placenta; a short abusive term accuses a woman of harlotry and describes fantastic intimacies on her part, whilst a man can have similar cryptic charges hurled at him.

Milder references are made to big eyes, knees, elbows, and sunken eyes; bones are said to be solid and lifeless like stone, and eyes and ears are described as blunt. Minor scornful phrases used by mothers to children include the impatient exclamation: 'Your fingers are thumbs'; arms and legs are said to be awkwardly long, the neck to be short, the head to be sitting on the shoulders.

Despite his emotional temperament, Stone Age man has artificial methods of arousing a display of temper. If he feels that he has been slighted and wishes to vent his grievances,

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754 accomplish this a spear-thrower is heated and repeatedly thrust into the wound to 'draw' the flesh together. Meanwhile the killers wait quietly till the greater-spirit of the victim creeps back from the bush, and as it enters the wound they quickly shut it in with a sheet of bark and plug the body vents to prevent its escape. Soon afterwards the body begins to move, and this is the signal for the young raggalk to climb into a tree; whereupon the raggalk calls on the spirits of his departed ancestors to help him restore life to the dead, and the victim rises to his feet. Sitting by his fire, the raggalk casually greets his resurrected victim: 'Oh, you are awake? I saw something hit you, I think it was a hawk, and then you went to sleep. It may be still in the trees, you had better look for it.'

The victim is completely in the power of the raggalk, and when he looks in the trees and sees the young raggalk, he thinks he sees a hawk and asks for a spear to kill it. But the old raggalk warns him that it is a man and that if he kills it he will die. This by-play is the signal for the young raggalk to come out of the tree and change back into a man. As the victim sees him he tries in vain to speak, but raggalk-magic has twisted his tongue, and to prove their control over him they ask him if he recognizes them. He replies absurdly: 'Yes, you are a crocodile and you a kangaroo.' Having no control over his speech proves that the magic has worked and that he will die. Taunting him still further, the raggalk tell him to return to his camp and to say that they have arranged for his death by snakebite, or by a shark or crocodile. It is believed that the victim attempts to tell his friends but never does so, for his tongue independently speaks of anything but raggalk magic. Meanwhile the raggalk escape to their own hordes, and in a day or so the victim feels ill and dies in his camp, or by the appointed snake or shark.

Raggalk are self-appointed; when an enemy dies, an [628] aspiring raggalk will often claim to have killed him. At

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times an innocent tribal-enemy is accused of having become a raggalk to cause the death, and more often than not the accused openly admits the allegations, and though he be constantly pursued by the avengers he glories in his spurious notoriety. [754] [628]

Simpler magic known as 'borrpoiyuma' is brought to bear on a victim through his personal possessions, footprints, or excreta; anyone may practice the art without special training. A victim is spied on till he is seen to drop sweat, spittle, or urine, and his enemy lights a fire over the spot to heat the sand. The victim receives this heat in his abdomen and dies by slow torture. Should he realize that his trouble is due to evil magic he may counteract it by finding the fire and throwing water on it. In the case of ordure, the witch-doctor deposits it in a fire in a circle of stones, and a large flat stone and sand are packed on top to make an oven, which is left untouched for one or two moons. By that time the curse has worked and the victim has died in agony from pains in his stomach. [755]

A Blue Mud Bay nomad made a gift of armlets to a man from the Wessel Islands. Months after the gift had been made the Blue Mud Bay man developed sores on his arm and attributed them to the visitor's evil magic, and it was said that he caused them by throwing the armlets into a fire. In this instance the magic did not prove fatal, for the victim stemmed it by pursuing his 'enemy' and spearing him! Dilly-bags, pubic shields, or belts impregnated with sweat, are also means of contact between a witch-doctor and his prey. When a woman went blind for no apparent reason, it was surmised that her dilly-bag had been stolen and burnt. Her normal good health was evidence that magic had been used against her, but because she was a woman it was not worth while to search for the evil worker. [562]

Injuries may be inflicted by burning an enemy's waste

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have killed him.' At other times the marrngeit is called to examine the body and reconstruct the crime, for by his supernatural powers he can see the marks of the alleged wound, and by sleight of hand he pulls it open to prove his case. He can see the ghost of the killer lurking near the victim's body, or if the body has been disposed of he can still name the killer by an examination of the victim's armlet, spear, or footprints.

Birrinjauwoi of Milingimbi died from pleurisy and was buried before a marrngeit could be brought to examine him. His ornaments and personal possessions were therefore put aside for the autopsy, but when a trickle of moisture came from the lips of the corpse it was hailed as the best specimen of all and was taken to the marrngeit. This marrngeit was a wise man and talked to them and asked questions till he felt sure of their feelings, and then dramatically named the 'killer'.

A youth was killed somewhere in the hills behind Blue Mud Bay, and within three days we heard of it from messengers who ran with the news to us at Yirrkala. They called on the relatives to organize a revenge party, and personal possessions from the corpse were shown and small parts of his flesh distributed. In the emotion which flamed through the country, wailing women incited their men to vengeance. I was reminded of the biblical story of an ancient Hebrew tribe which received parts of a body that had been carved up and sent amongst them to cry for vengeance, and they swept over the hills of Palestine to exterminate a related horde.

Relics from a dead man are known as 'maiyabala', and consist of finger joints, small bones, fragments of the spear embedded in the body, dried blood, skin, flesh, hair, or ornaments. They are given to relatives as reminders of their obligation to exact blood vengeance and by the very acceptance of them the pact is sealed. A victim's lesser spirit

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accompanies the maiyabala to assist in locating and killing the murderer. Maiyabala are often carried in the mouth, in totemic dilly-bags, or rolled in bees wax and tied round the neck. They give extra strength and skill to the wearers and guide them to the enemy, who, in turn, is made unwary and tired.

Raiwola told me that he had accepted such a maiyabala but for years his vow remained unfulfilled. Then one day after a long kangaroo hunt in the rain he stood warming himself by a fire with several other men, amongst whom chanced to be the killer of his relative. Without a word Raiwola plunged his spear into him, and in reply to the astounded questions of the huntsmen, he produced his maiyabala as proof that it had been done in settlement of the old debt.

It is rarely left to one man to avenge a death, for in the heat of emotion that follows a killing the relatives go in a body to exact vengeance. Killing-parties are known as 'merringor', and their appropriate sign in the sign-language is wiping the open palm down over the face to suggest their ruthlessness in wiping out men, women, and children. In feverish passion, and with maiyabala and totemic dilly-bags slung from their necks, merringor lose all fear and travel relentlessly till they are lean and exhausted. They daub their bodies with white clay, a practice which plainly indicates their intentions, they creep silently on their enemies, and with wild yells they hurl their spears into the sleeping groups. Such raids are seldom bloodless, and more deaths result from these attacks than from all other forms of violence.

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are painted on the clean smooth skull. Bones are often carried for years in long bark parcels, and women wail over them at any hour of the day or night. Once this poignancy passes, the ceremonies are completed, and an inter-tribal gathering is regarded as suitable for a bone-burial; several skeletons may be interred in the one post. These long hollow burial-posts are cut from the hollow trunks of gum trees, scraped smooth, and carefully painted with designs and symbols descriptive of totem centres. Mourning ceremonies are conducted each night until the bones are packed inside; skulls and large bones are broken up to conserve space and each bone is realistically rammed into place. At one burial ceremony I could not understand why one horde painted the skull and another horde dressed body bones, and it was explained that the bones belonged to one horde and the skull to another. This skull should have been interred ten years previously, when the skeleton was packed in a burial post, but the women did not want to part with it and had kept it till the present ceremony.

With a shout men close in on the burial post and run with it to a small hole in the sand, where it is erected and rammed into place, to stand about twelve feet above ground. In a frenzy of emotion, men dance round it in a final benediction and are encouraged by intensified wailing from the women. An unnatural silence follows the dance, for it concludes abruptly when the leader says simply: 'It is finished.' No further interest is taken in the bones even if the post later topples over and they are scattered on the sand.

Skeletons on the Wessel Islands and Woodah Island are deposited in caves. Scores of bats hung from the roof and fluttered into the sunlight when I went into this cave of the dead on Woodah Island. Skulls lay around in all stages of disintegration, and on the floor there was a pile of bone dust almost two feet high. A large horde once lived here, but now, apart from those who occasionally come over from the

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*773 'There must be something in that water.'

'Yes. This might be a Wangarr (Great Spirit) place. I think a big Wangarr snake lives in there and ate all our food.'

The sun had set, it was too late to look for a new camp, and, in any case, the younger Woman was too weak to travel. Tired and hungry, they sat at the door of their hut, watching a strange white cloud in the west. It was about the size of a man's hand, but as it climbed overhead it increased in size till it was as big as a turtle. It then turned black, spread over the sky and came down near the lagoon, whereupon torrents of rain fell into the water and on the Women's camp; strangely enough, the ground a few chains away remained dry.

The stage was now set.

Thunder roared and lightning crackled and hissed along the ground, till the young Woman roused out of her coma and asked: 'Sister, what is the matter?' And, as her child was born at that moment, she prophesied: 'This is no ordinary storm. Wangarr is sending it out of the lagoon to drown us.'

'Yes, that is true. We had better leave the child and dance outside to stop the rain.'

In the darkness they circled round the hut, dancing and singing, in a desperate attempt to divert the attention of Wangarr, but the rain fell with even greater violence. They had but one other scheme, the singing of the third great native ceremony known as the Junggowan. And to the Sisters dancing in the rain goes the honour of first performing the songs, dances, and myths in the present-day Junggowan which, like the Ngara and Gunabibee, is an inter-tribal link; the myths it enshrines are sung and danced when hordes meet for intercourse. Their efforts had no effect on the rain, but the totemic powers released through their sacred pantomime disturbed the serpent Kaitjalan.

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